

Just Friends



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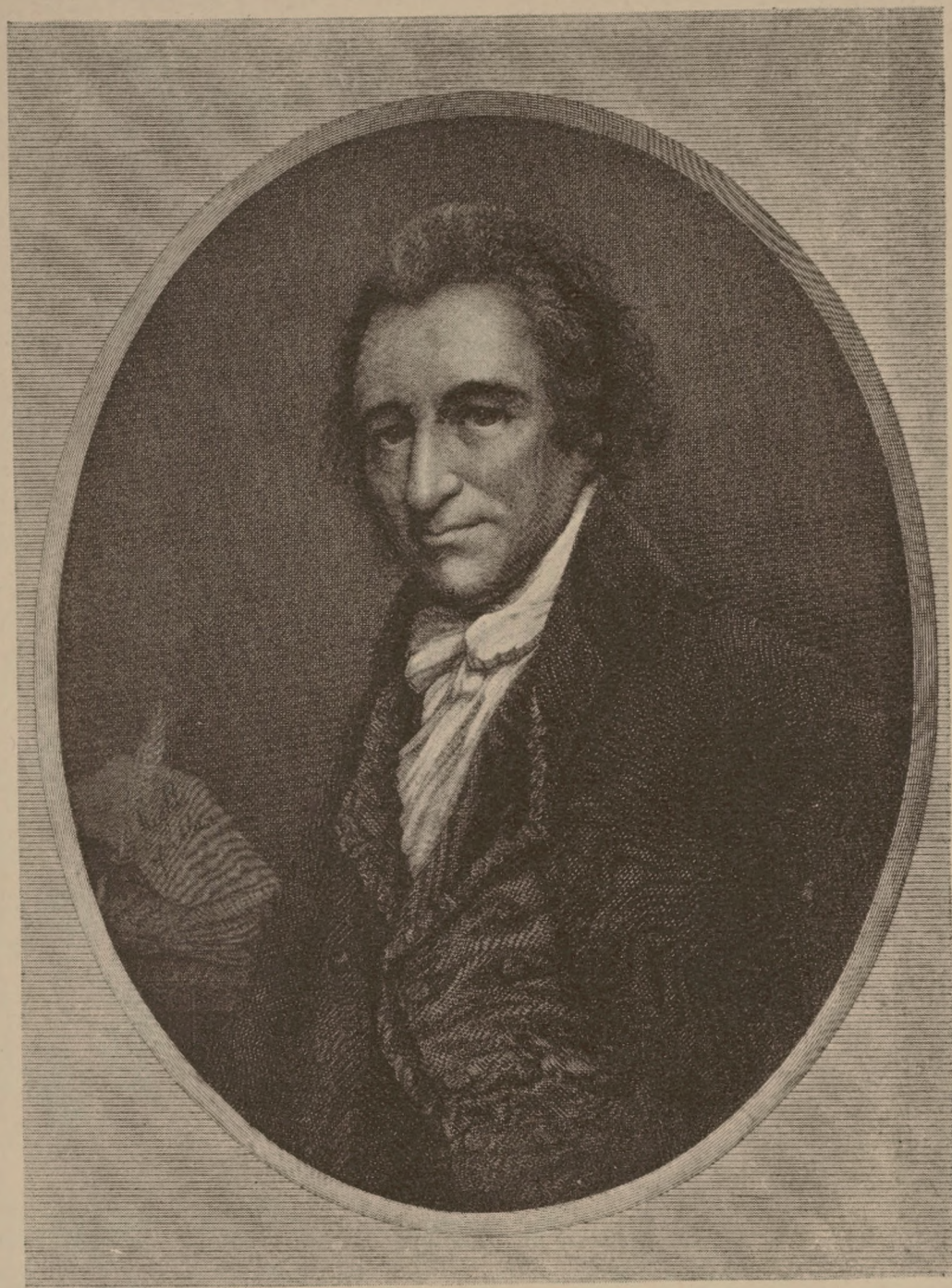
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Just Friends

America is destined to put into practice
all the great common sense doctrines of
her own saviour, Thomas Paine, and by
so doing become the Saviour of the world.

M. I. T.



Thomas Paine

Just Friends

A Common Sense Story

By

Mary Ives Todd

AUTHOR OF "VIOLINA," "AN AMERICAN ABELARD
AND HELOISE," "THE HETERODOX MARRIAGE," ETC.

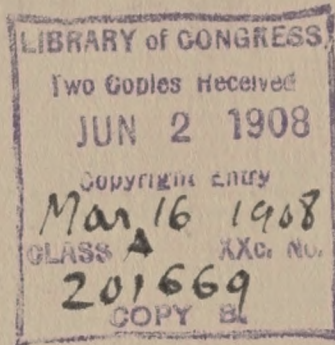
"The people have always crucified in
one way or another, the one who
would save them from the conse-
quences of their own blindness."

The Swastika.



New York
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To the beloved memory of my father, Homer de Grasse Ives, ("H. D. Ives") who, though unknown to fame, practiced the kind of religion which made stout and invincible the hearts of the great molders of America, Paine, Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, Emerson —The Religion of Common-Sense.

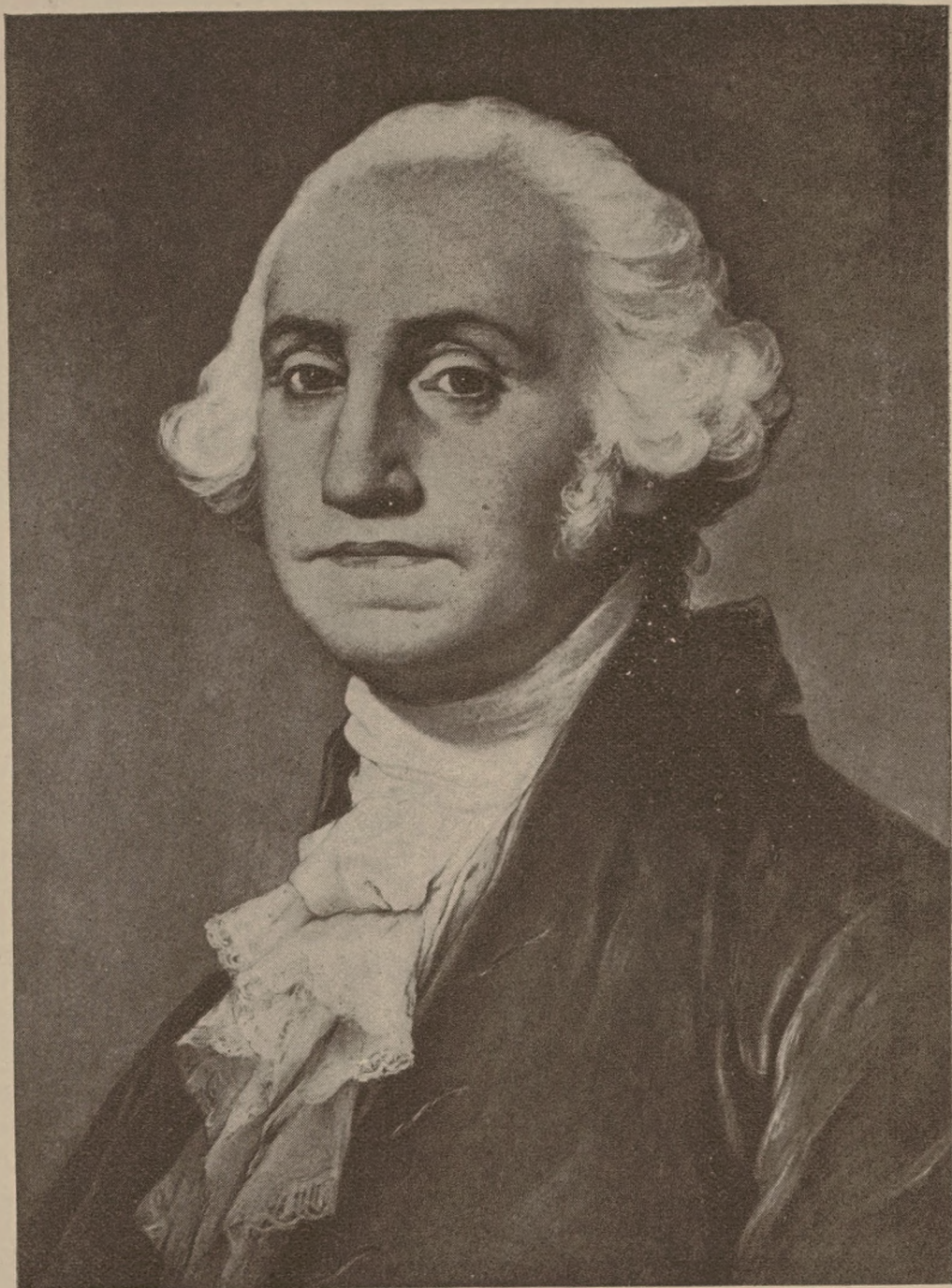
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Chapter One



George Washington

“ Thus the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, in the time that Paine edited it, was a seed-bag from which this sower scattered the seeds of great reforms ripening with the progress of civilization. Through the more popular press he sowed also. Events selected his seeds of American independence, of republican equality, freedom from royal, ecclesiastical, and hereditary privilege, for a swifter and more imposing harvest ; but the whole circle of human ideas and principles was recognized by this lone wayfaring man. The first to urge extension of the principles of independence to the enslaved negro ; the first to arraign monarchy, and to point out the danger of its survival in presidency ; the first to propose articles of a more thorough nationality to the new-born States ; the first to advocate international arbitration ; the first to expose the absurdity and criminality of duelling ; the first to suggest more rational ideas of marriage and divorce ; the first to advocate national and international copyright ; the first to plead for the animals ; the first to demand justice for woman : what brilliants would our modern reformers have contributed to a coronet for that man’s brow, had he not presently worshipped the God of his fathers after the way that theologians called heresy ! ”

From the Life of Thomas Paine by Moncure Daniel Conway.

Just Friends

CHAPTER ONE

They do not kiss each other—only look into each other's eyes. And God's angel lays his hand on their heads.—RUSKIN.

THE couple had been engaged in an ardent conversation concerning the life of America's most advanced thinker, Thomas Paine, when, after a pause, the man said abruptly:

"I would ask very little of a wife now—very little—for I have been well broken on the wheel of life. Once I could be as impatient, as passionate and as dictatorial—perhaps as selfish—as any of my lordly sex. But not now—not now."

The pathos of these halting words brought tears to the kindly eyes of the woman, eyes which, when not filled with an expression of meditative melancholy or passionate introspection, were as sweet and modest as those of a Raphael.

No other reply seemed forthcoming and the man continued:

“ You shall set your own terms—Sarah Shelley.”

This time, two great tears rolled down the delicate, pale cheeks, as the last words dropped tenderly from his lips; followed by a quick glance of amazement and mute inquiry, which seemed to ask, “ Why, how did you know my real name is Sarah Shelley? ”

No one had called her by that name for so many years. It had died, she thought, along with those early days that were filled with roses rather than crosses. It was impossible for her to reply in words; she could only look into his eyes and feel that God’s angel had laid a hand on their silvered heads.

“ Ah, you think I do not know your life,” he said, “ that I am only familiar with that part passed in Italy’s fair Florence. You mistake, for well do I know it—from the time you were born in a little out-of-the-way village in America; when the great West was scarcely more than a wilderness. Perhaps I knew you ages before. Who knows? ”

The oddness of the man’s last observation gave a new turn to the woman’s thoughts and helped her to check the rising sobs, likewise to reply timidly, after a moment’s hesitation:

“ You mean to say you know the outside of my life? You cannot know the inside, else you would not ask me to marry you.”

"You are going away," he pursued, without heeding her words. "You do not even apprise me of the fact, or tell me where you are going. How I fear to lose the sweetness, the comfort, the genuine companionship of these latter days! Alas! why are you so suddenly cruel?"

The man laid his hand affectionately, clingingly, on the woman's, and again his eyes sought hers as if he would read her very soul.

"But I do not know exactly where I am going, myself, and I never dreamed you would really care," she faltered.

"I not care! Not care if the sun, moon and stars suddenly drop out of my existence! Not care if life becomes again a stupid, monotonous tale—insufferably tedious! Ah, me! what is life worth to a person done with its practical activities and ambitions, if genuine, sympathetic companionship such as ours has been is denied him? Do you not recall the time we read together the announcement that Admiral Dewey had smashed the Spanish fleet at Cavite? How for the first time we gazed boldly into each other's eyes and shook hands until our shoulders were lame for a week? There—don't cry! I thought to make you laugh at the spread-eagleism we indulged that day, and ever since. For well you know we date our rise to

the dignity of a world power from that great event. Before we were simply 'the States' in haughty, aristocratic Europe's eyes. Now we are 'the Great Republic' and regarded with mingled fear and dread by all the Old World monarchical governments. . . . But tell me the inside of your life, dear Sarah. Perhaps we can plan to go on together, somehow. Uncle Sam has doubtless plenty more things to smash, and who will rejoice with me over fresh victories when you are gone? "

"Not to-day, please. I am very tired—I must go."

Mrs. Wells rose as she spoke, and offering her hand in token of farewell, was about to take her way still farther up the cross-marked hill which she had so often climbed—alone.

"No, no. I protest! You shall not climb this steep Via Crucia unassisted—nor any other—when I am with you. Here, take my arm. Together we shall seem mounting heavenward. Pity there are so few steps yet to climb!" he continued when they had proceeded quite some distance. "I should have caught up with you before, where the green fence begins. That fence now shows progress—that religious people no longer insist on making the most of every cross as they come to it. But here we are!"

This he said as a cab drew up, the driver having received a secret signal while Mrs. Wells was glancing dubiously toward a high, bright green, wooden fence to which her companion had just referred. In another instant, and before she could utter a word of amazement at his high-handed proceeding, she was literally bundled into the carriage where her companion seated himself by her side, and they were quickly driven in an opposite direction.

The "Hill of Crosses," one of the most ancient Via Crucia known to the Catholic world, though still a steep ascent and probably in the dim past but a mere picturesque, hilly path which devotees climbed on their knees, stopping to pray as each rude wooden cross was reached—appeared to Mrs. Wells a perfectly modeled Italian "via," that resembled a very wide staircase with steps at regular intervals. On one side, over a rather high concrete wall, she caught a glimpse now and then, of a luxuriant garden, flushed with spring-time roses. On the other side rose the "Hill of Crosses," overtopped by tall, brooding, sombre cypresses, from which descended an olive grove and a sinuous road that led from the Porta San Miniato toward the heart of Florence.

Mrs. Wells reminded her companion that it was along this very road on the evening of a Good

Friday, once upon a time, that Giovanni Gualberto hurried to his home on the outskirts of Florence, his heart aflame with rage because his mother wept and refused to be comforted, and his father brooded with a heart as black and stormy as his own.

He was accompanied by some stern companions who, like himself, were pledged to vengeance—to slay the assassin of his brother; and when they had mounted about half way up the hill, they came suddenly face to face with the very man whose life they had vowed to take at the first opportunity. He was alone and unarmed; and at sight of Gualberto's terrible countenance, the miserable wretch, seeing no way of escape, extended his arms in the form of a cross and sank upon his knees in an attitude of helpless pleading.

For quite some time the high-strung youth of noble lineage stood motionless, regarding his intended victim, his sword raised to strike the fatal blow, a fierce conflict raging in his breast. His word was pledged, his honor was at stake; yet there before him knelt a suppliant looking, ah! so like a cross in the fitful moonlight, while over against him rose the Hill of Crosses, each appearing to plead with the culprit for mercy, for forgiveness. And beside, was it not on this very day that Christ had hung on the Cross, and, though suffering the frenzied

agony of the crucified had yet forgiven, nay, had prayed for, his enemies?

So the conflict ended; and after a hurried prayer for divine aid, Gualberto made the sign of the Cross, flung down his sword, dismounted from his horse, and clasping the kneeling wretch in his arms, told him he forgave him. Then they parted; and while the assassin pursued his way to Florence, Gualberto dismissed his companions, and torn with mingled grief and joy, "with every pulse throbbing with a sudden revulsion of feeling," he remounted and rode on to the Church of San Miniato at the top of the hill.

Ah, who that has ever visited fair Florence but tenderly recalls San Miniato in Monte, towering on its lofty eminence above the city and visible along the Lung 'Arno, from the Ponto alle Grazie to the Ponto alla Carraja! Who that has stood on the marble steps of this ancient church can forget the enchanting picture of the Valley of the Arno, or the old dismantled fortress defended by Michelangelo against the Medici, or the long avenue of cypresses and the declivities robed in vineyards and olive-grounds between the gate and the lofty heights above!

Tender? Ah, yes! tender indeed the memories that cluster about this ancient structure founded in

honor of a Florentine martyr who was executed on its site in the year 254, and thus ended a life of suffering for daring to change his religious beliefs. By birth an Armenian Prince, he accepted service in the Army of Rome where he was denounced as a Christian and taken before the Emperor Decius, who was encamped at the time on a hill outside the gates of Florence.

This august Roman potentate promptly ordered him thrown to the beasts in the amphitheatre, where, according to Christian tradition, a panther was let loose upon him, but, when he called upon Jesus to save him his life was miraculously spared. Yet his suffering did not end there; for he was cast into a boiling cauldron, afterward suspended from a gallows, stoned and shot with javelins; but in his agony an angel descended to comfort him, and clothed him in a garment of light. Finally he was beheaded. Religion in the past has been a hard taskmaster, but it has developed strength of character.

In this beautiful church, built to commemorate the last tragic and fatal scene in the life of this Florentine martyr, Gualberto soon found himself, and quickly strode to the Crucifix over the altar. Here he knelt; and as he fervently prayed that divine forgiveness be granted him for the crime he had been

on the point of committing, it seemed to his excited imagination that the Figure bowed its head in gracious assent. "From that moment, the world and all its vanities became hateful to him. He felt like one who had been saved on the edge of a precipice." Gualberto's next move was to join the Benedictine Order.

The Benedictine Order of Monks is a very old one founded by St. Benedict who was born at Nursia, in the Dukedom of Spoleto, in Italy, 480 A. D. It appears he was born a recluse, for we read that at fourteen years of age he retired to a desert place forty miles distant from Subiaca, where he took up his residence in a cave, and so successfully did he remain concealed for a time that his abode was known only to St. Romanus who performed the friendly office of descending daily by a rope into the cave, to carry to its occupant the necessities of earthly life. Subsequently, when the austere life of St. Benedict had become known to the monks of a neighboring monastery, they chose him for their abbot; but friction having developed over this arrangement, he returned to his solitude, to be followed eventually by so many persons that he was enabled to rear a dozen monasteries. When near fifty years of age, St. Benedict retired to Monte Cassino, where idolatry still prevailed, and at once

set about converting the people to what he considered the "true faith." Being successful in this, he broke the statue of Apollo, overthrew the altar and instituted the order of his name, converting the Greek temples into a monastery. Thus doth one religion supplant another!

It remained for Benedictine, a follower of St. Benedict, to make the three vows—perfect chastity, absolute poverty, and implicit obedience in all respects to superiors—irrevocable. Hitherto, self-rule and independence had been permitted the monks more or less; henceforth, they were to live out their days in a monastery and be in servile subjection to the authority of their abbot. Ah, it has been so easy for the religions of the past to develop both tyranny and fanaticism!

All these memories from her readings crowded one upon the other as they rushed through Mrs. Wells' mind; and she realized that much the same feeling which had caused Gualberto to turn his back on the world and retire to a monastery had possessed her bosom also, when her son was suddenly stricken from her side, and she had found herself alone in a strange land. Like him, also, she sought in what are termed "sacred places," the consolation which she believed the world could not afford; though, as she had been reared a Protestant, she

did not permanently take up her abode in any religious place of refuge, nor assume its vows.

Later, when the war between the United States and Spain broke out she was glad she had not committed herself to a life of seclusion, for it would have been impossible for her to have rushed every morning, Sunday included, to read the latest telegrams and the morning papers, as soon as the dusting was done in the great Vieusseux Library.

And very early, promptly, deftly, were the English reading-rooms put into exquisite order in this celebrated library founded in 1820 by Giampietro Vieusseux, and declared by the well-informed to be "the largest and most reliable circulating library in Europe." Its founder was one of those geniuses "who gave a great impulse to modern Italian Literature," for he established not only a great library in a grand old palace, but also three excellent periodicals, one of them called "L'Autologia," which received contributions from Italy's keenest and best pens but was finally suppressed by the Tuscan government on account of two articles entitled "Peter of Russia," and "Pausanias." The others kept safer ground, however, one being devoted to the encouragement of agriculture, the other to learned matters; and so universally admired, beloved and influential, became this gentleman of

French extraction, that he was called "the second Grand Duke of Florence." His death was the occasion of rare tributes of praise, and his body was followed to its final resting place by the most illustrious persons of Florence.

Although this library was in no sense a club where men and women could meet, become acquainted and exchange ideas and aspirations with one another, it nevertheless afforded sometimes a sort of mystical—or should one say psychological—means of acquaintanceship, which occasionally ripened into practical companionship or sympathetic friendship, rarely into love and marriage, for the regular habitues were mostly weatherbeaten-looking specimens of humanity, long since anchored to their mates. Exceptions there were, however, of homeless waifs of both sexes, who, by a multitude of secret signs, had come to know each other well and to feel a deep and ideal sympathy for the intuitively guessed loneliness which pervaded their stranded fellow beings.

Possibly, as interesting a couple of tempest-tossed, heart-lonely individuals as any who sought information and distraction at the Reading-Rooms, were Mrs. Wells and Mr. Smith. For some months they had met frequently among other busy readers at the tables, without taking any special interest in each other beyond what was natural when they became

aware that each was an American imbued with a common love for Thomas Paine, and that each was specially interested in the press comments upon the war then in progress between "The States" and the dignified, well-bred Old-World power, Spain.

There was nothing specially captivating about the physical make-up of either of these individuals, any more than there was distinction in their names—Mr. Smith—Mrs. Wells. Probably at twenty-five Mr. Smith had presented to the world a splendid physique, when he must have stood six feet one in his stockings, at that age he was doubtless as straight as a pine and mettlesome as a racer; but his broad-shouldered form was now slightly stooping and suggested frailness rather than strength. The once keen, bright, handsome, deep-set grey eyes had already become dim and somewhat mild in their glance, and they were usually covered by glasses. Metamorphosis had likewise transformed the rich, dark locks; it had thinned their number and changed the color from black to iron-grey. But the fine square, regularly-proportioned forehead still suggested the magnanimity of the lion, and the manner in which he wore his moustache, which grew straight along to the corners of his mouth, the ends turned upward in a sharp curve, betokened a natural rapidity of thought and action. He was always dressed

well, though occasionally his clothes presented the appearance of having been worn for some time, which was probably due to the fact that he always selected the most durable material that could be found.

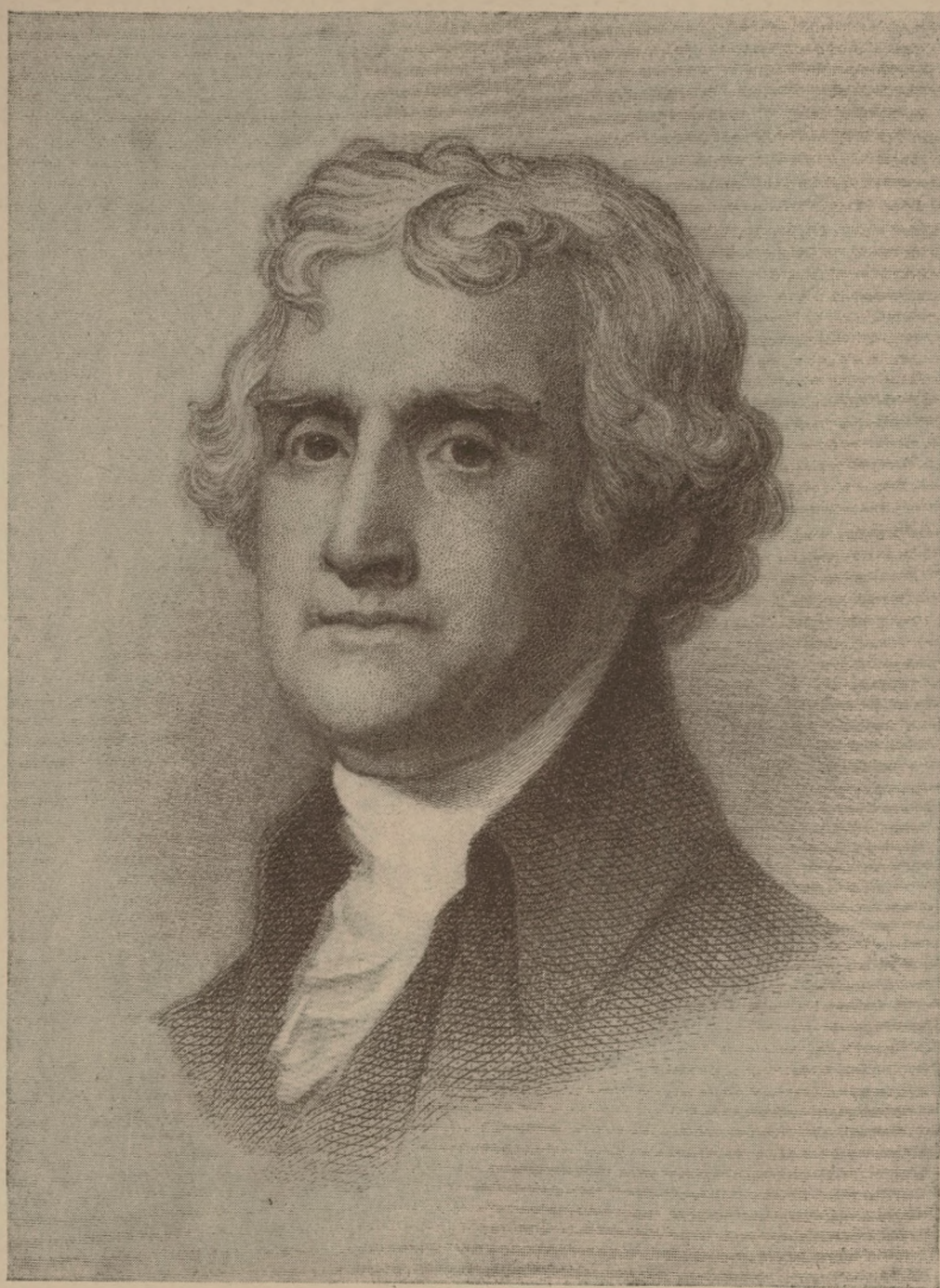
A divine evolutionary necessity probably causes young people to fall in love with their opposites in characteristics rather than to make matches of "like to like." On the other hand, middle-aged or elderly people, in latter days especially, are more apt to choose for companions those in accord with themselves; the time being past in which it is possible to make radical changes in character or conduct.

This was particularly the case with the Americans whose psychological acquaintance ripened so rapidly into practical friendship amid the environment of the old Vieusseux Library, for both were apparently as nearly alike in the essential features of their being, and in the ripeness of their individuality, as it is possible for a man and a woman to become, notwithstanding the fact that Mrs. Wells looked much the more youthful, partly because of greater attention to personal appearance, and partly because of her erect carriage. She was not naturally more fastidious than Mr. Smith, but, as her boy liked his mama to look young and pretty, she had conformed to his wishes until the habit had become a second

nature; though it was not difficult for her to retain her youthful figure since Nature had been kind enough to leave unchanged the chaste outline of bust and waist.

It is true their eyes, though alike in being set straight and well apart, were different in color and beauty and depth of setting; hers having the less depth and keenness of expression; but, on the other hand, they were larger, with a more beautifully colored iris, and shaded by long, curling lashes, which formed her loveliest physical attribute. Their other features were also alike in being moulded after a generous fashion, though dissimilar in minor points; and the expression of their countenances were so strikingly benignant that seeing them together one would mentally exclaim, "Ah, a well-matched, harmonious couple, evidently in secure possession of that sweetest of marital secrets, a good understanding."

Chapter Two



Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Paine dreamed the most glorious dream of human freedom that ever enchanted the mind of man ; fairer and sweeter than lay under the broken marbles of Greece ; brighter and better than was buried with the dead eagles of Rome. We know not what gave birth to this dream of his soul. The atmosphere of his early life has faded from the sky. The key to his youth is lost. He had lived mostly in the realm of thought. How the hope of freedom for all mankind gained entrance to his mind no one can tell ; what rivers fed it, what suns nourished it, what stars looked down upon it by night can never be learned. He was a genius of solitude. His mind nursed sustenance from the heart of the universe. The wrongs he read of made him long for justice ; the falsehoods he heard turned his heart to truth, the oppression about him kindled liberty within him. This great dream for mankind came from his love of man.

Marilla M. Ricker.

CHAPTER TWO

Of manners gentle, of affections mild!
In wit a man, simplicity a child.—POPE.

“**A**H! let me take charge of your dearly beloved volume of Thomas Paine since you will not leave it in the cab,” said Mr. Smith, as he assisted Mrs. Wells to alight near the gate leading to the San Miniato Campo Santo. He chose to stop at this point because the church itself was no longer used as a place of worship, being a favorite shrine for sightseers, and he well knew that both the church and the premises had become a fashionable place of interment.

“You see,” he continued with playful raillery, “I spoke truly when I said I knew you well. It is for that reason we stop here for a little quiet meditation before we find our way back to the busy thoroughfares of Florence. You dearly love a graveyard, Sarah, and doubtless you would not rest well to-night were you deprived of your usual recreation.”

“Thank you for the pleasure you are giving me,” Mrs. Wells replied, “but it is, I fear, at the expense of your own. I think I have never met you here.”

"No, not likely. I was here but once—and fled quickly when my eye fell on a certain monument. I will tell you about it some time."

"Let us return without delay if the place has disagreeable associations for you. Come!"

"No, I shall not mind the haunting memories of the past which it calls up, with you beside me. Besides the gate is open, and the keeper will think it strange if we do not enter."

Feeling intuitively that the place somehow depressed him, she slipped her arm within his and said cheerfully:

"We will sit for a moment on the marble steps of the church and watch the sun sink into his splendid tomb. You see, he is making gorgeous preparations for his departure."

They seated themselves and looked for a time in perfect silence on the grand canvas unrolled before them, which only the finger of the greatest of artists, Nature, can paint. It is true, great rugged, artistic Florentines had done their part in aiding the Unseen Artist to present a scene which, once viewed by the sympathetic human eye, can never be forgotten; had indeed cunningly imitated Nature in the solidity, the magnificence, the picturesqueness, nay, even the exquisite mystical charm, of their handiwork.

Presently Mrs. Wells said: "It is singular that as

many times as I have sat here or on yonder steps, I have never been able to do so without George Eliot's description of this view coming vividly to mind. Do you recall it? It is in *Romola*."

"I do not. Some time has elapsed since I read the book; it was upon my arrival in Florence. I recall, however, that it deals in a masterly way with Florentine life during the turbulent times preceding the martyrdom of Savonarola. What has she to say about this poetic picture?"

"She imagines that the spirit of a Florentine citizen, whose eyes were closed in the time of Columbus, has been permitted to return to the famous hill of San Miniato, and then proceeds to portray how familiar the scene appears, she says:

" 'It is not only the mountains and the westward-bending river that he recognizes; not only the dark sides of Mount Morello opposite him, and the long valley of the Arno that seems to stretch its grey, low-tufted luxuriance to the far-off ridges of Carrara; and the steep height of Fiesole, with its crown of monastic walls and cypresses; and all the green and grey slopes sprinkled with villas which he can name as he looks at them. He sees other familiar objects much closer to his daily walks. For, though he misses the seventy or more towers that once surrounded the walls and encircled the city as with a

regal diadem, his eyes will not dwell on that blank; they are drawn irresistibly to the unique tower, springing, like a tall flower-stem towards the sun, from the square turretted mass of the Old Palace in the very heart of the city—the tower that looks none the worse for the four centuries that have passed since he used to walk under it. The great dome, too, greatest in the world, which, in his early boyhood had been only a daring thought in the mind of a small, quick-eyed man—there it raises its large curves still, eclipsing the hills. And the well-known bell-tower—Giotto's, with its distant hint of rich color, and the graceful spired Badia, and the rest—he looked at them all from the shoulder of his nurse.' ”

“That is good—but what a memory you must have! I remember comparatively little of what I read nowadays. I can recall much which occurred years ago better to-day than things of yesterday. Life is a strange business, is it not? ”

“Truly so,” returned Mrs. Wells, her eyes filling as his last words, freighted with a touching pathos, reached her ear. “Ah, but this won't do,” she resumed. “Two elderly people like you and me should be retreating before these cold steps get in their work and the air resumes its spring chilliness.”

She rose as she finished speaking, and her compan-

ion did likewise. Before, however, they had turned to depart, she said, with evident hesitation:

“Would you mind going to see just one tombstone that has a peculiar interest for me? It is not in the church but at the back, and it is one of late date.”

“Certainly not. It would give me pleasure.”

“This way; please follow me. Probably you are aware that I am having a monument prepared here to be erected in America to the memory of my son. It is nearly finished. But I wish you to see the one which has suggested some ideas for it. I would like your opinion. True, it is too late to make much change, but the cross might be left off if we could think of something better to substitute.”

“That depends—on what sort of a boy he was,—how he looked at life—what he accomplished and so on.”

“His life was a strenuous one, I can assure you. He won some victories that cost him so dear they doubtless helped cut short his existence, while he was but a beautiful youth. Ah, here is the monument, a graceful one, is it not?”

Mrs. Wells pointed as she spoke to a finely proportioned, well-arranged and exquisitely finished marble symbol reared in a “plat,” adorned with rare roses and luxuriant ivy. The pedestal was of

excellent workmanship and depicted scenes in the life of a strenuous young hero.

Resting on the artistic, substantial pedestal was a well-poised, graceful figure, with drapery arranged about it as only the Greeks and Italians can do naturally. The half-curling locks, somewhat long, abundant and flowing, enhanced the poetic beauty of the face. One delicate hand clung to an anchor lodged securely in the pedestal just behind the figure; the other, together with the arm, encircled a cross on the opposite side of the anchor. Over the forehead shone a star, while the countenance was lifted heavenward in submissive yet expectant repose.

"Yes, graceful and well done, but conventional," declared Mr. Smith. "The proper thing for women and monks and nuns, who look on the cross as the true symbol of life; but men ought to have a different ideal. They know very well that life means strenuous struggle and the survival of the fittest; that original sin is nothing more nor less than our brute inheritance which has to be coped with and mastered before we can mount triumphantly Heavenward. Hell is anywhere that man finds himself beast-ridden. I know what I am talking about. So would you if you had served the apprenticeship which has been my fate."

"You must tell me about it all, soon," she said

sympathetically, as she took his arm and signified by pointing ominously to the sky, that they must go.

In a few moments they had regained their carriage and were being driven rapidly along the road leading into the Piazzale Michelangelo, which they followed until the front part of the terrace had been reached, when Mr. Smith turned abruptly to his companion, and said:

“Can you not spare a few moments to enjoy with me this very real view of Florence and its environs? I grant that it has not the mystical beauty of the San Miniato view, but has it not some features of interest which the other lacks?”

Mr. Smith spoke rather deprecatingly—as Mrs. Wells gladly permitted him to lift her from the carriage—since he laid no claim to an eye for artistic effect; and his main reason for preferring this view to the San Miniato was because from the front of the upper terrace, or even from the one below, of this Piazzale, one could overlook such a mass of high, solid-walled, fireproof houses, which, like the grand heights about the city, seemed to set time at naught, affording meanwhile not only stout protection from the elements and from the destructive passions of man aflame with anger or malice or greed, but palatial homes for her people from generation to generation.

Mrs. Wells, who was not really observing anything in particular, but rather taking in with eager, entranced eye the whole gorgeous scene of "la bella Firenze," divided by the gleaming Arno yet united by her picturesque bridges in her nest of villa-crowned hills and reposeful mountains, all which were made transcendently beautiful in the glory of a sinking sun in a glorious sky—could only murmur:

"How very, very beautiful it all is! You are right. We certainly have the finest possible view of Florence from this point," said Mrs. Wells with characteristic enthusiasm.

"And to think," Mr. Smith urged, as they re-seated themselves in the carriage, "that there is not a wooden shingle on all that mass of houses to catch fire; not a board in all their solid, erect walls to give or crumble; that her people live in palaces all the time!"

"But I suppose America could build a good-sized city while these Italians are compiling one of their tall, stout-walled, picturesque buildings."

"Yes, and burn it down again! Good heavens! it makes my blood boil to think in what an insane, criminal, murderous fashion America houses her people! Why, do you know that the maximum destruction by fire in all Europe is less than one-sixth that of our own fool country?"

Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Smith hurried on:

“I am told that though we build something like five million dollars’ worth of new buildings a year, our fire losses exceed that sum—when cost of fire departments and insurance is included.”

“But the people must get back something by way of insurance.”

“Less than a fifth of what her fire losses cost, and that done with much friction and often litigation. Those who have given the matter attention assert that America could even house her very poor in fire-proof buildings at an ultimate economy if she really cared to do so or gave the matter sufficient attention and made proper laws. Think what artistic homes we might create year by year if we built them substantial and fireproof at the start. We could proceed at our leisure to decorate them inside and out. I would have some niches left in the stout, unburnable walls of my house for the busts or statues of the heroes I admire, and place them there as I was able to have them made.”

“I suppose a statue or a bust of Lorenzo Medici, ‘The Magnificent,’ for instance, would occupy one recess, since you admire him so much,” replied Mrs. Wells, laughing softly at the idea.

“Most assuredly! But how is it now? Why,

at any hour of the day or night you may be notified that all your treasured possessions, as well as your home, has gone up in smoke. You return to find a blackened ruin! ”

Mr. Smith spoke with a tinge of bitterness, having suffered not a little from America's superficial mode of building.

“ True, but America is young, and her heritage was a huge wilderness, scarcely touched by the hand of man. Why, when a couple of Italy's adventurous sons sailed across the ocean one after the other, and laid eyes upon her virgin soil, Florence was already housed in her great fortress palaces as you see her to-day; while her achievements in art were the wonder and admiration of the world. Also, at this time, her Galileo was making discoveries which not only unsettled everything on this little ball of an earth, but disclosed to man a universe of new worlds. Ah, this same beautiful Florence has been a mighty mother of genius and intrepid daring. I love her well.”

“ Then why do you turn your back on her? Why not permanently remain, as so many do who speak our tongue, and who, if not great in some way, can yet enter with delight into the spirit of the works of those who were—like my humble self, for instance.”

" 'Tis a long story, which I will tell you when you can listen," the woman replied, with a sad, dreamy air. For it was hard for her to turn her back on the beautiful city wherein had dwelt and wrought such mighty spirits of the past, and under whose spell she herself was beginning to see and realize somewhat of the infinite splendor and wonder and mystery of God's universe.

"Tell me to-morrow!" Mr. Smith urged, his old impetuous spirit rising as he spoke.

"Not to-morrow, I think, since I have made arrangements to visit Santa Croce by early morning light."

"With a company of sightseers?"

"No, simply with an Italian woman and her husband. He is a guide who can give me some added information concerning the art treasures which have become very dear to me during my stay here."

"May I not go, too," he pleaded pathetically, as he held her hand in his. "Remember, I may not be able to prevail on you to remain in Florence."

There was no other carriage in sight, and they were being driven very slowly, according to Mr. Smith's order, around the magnificently terraced hill extending from the Piazzale Michelangelo to the Porta San Niccolo.

"Certainly, I should be pleased to have your company." Mrs. Wells beamed prettily on her companion as she spoke, but the next instant withdrew her hand from his as she saw a gay party advancing rapidly toward them.

"They are evidently afraid the sun will get down before they can get up to see what he is about," said Mr. Smith with an amused air. "They do well to hasten, for sometimes his gorgeous effects swiftly terminate, leaving but a dull, leaden sky and a dim landscape in place of inconceivable splendor."

"Yes, the Great Artist works with such ease and swiftness. He can afford to make lightning changes. It is man who, having done a great scene with infinite labor and pains, must needs preserve it with not less care, his masterpieces being so few and far between."

"Well, I can make the same plea for man that you made for America a few moments ago. He is young, or at least, did not show up till late. Nature had got her hand well trained and was a swift and sure artist before he entered upon his apprenticeship here. Naturally, he is at present niggardly and monopolistic; but when he can produce great effects with comparative ease, then he will care as little for them as Nature appears to do. In fact he will imitate Infinity in being both productive and generous."

“ Really! ” exclaimed Mrs. Wells, as she turned her amused glance full on her companion. “ You think that when man can multiply, say loaves and fishes, with the same ease with which Christ is declared to have done, that he will distribute as freely? How about our own countrymen, those who can and do multiply freely, not only the things we eat, but a multitude of other things essential to human needs? ”

“ Oh, I will have to admit America has as yet developed but few business men with Christ’s power for equitable distribution of the necessities of life. But that will come in time, for America has been dowered with an abundance of common-sense. Ah, I perceive we have arrived at your pensione.”

Mr. Smith spoke these words sadly and reluctantly as he proceeded to alight, the carriage having stopped. When he had lifted her out and they stood a moment together before parting, he said, holding her hand with a firm grip:

“ Would you mind dismissing the guide and his wife and permit me to serve you in that capacity to-morrow? I fear the time is short when I shall have the privilege of being with you.”

“ And you wish to monopolize what there is of it? ” she said with a little significant and extra pressure of the hand and a charming, quizzical smile.

For some reason his words of a few hours before came vividly to her mind—and caused a smile now. They were these: “I would ask very little of a wife now—very little—for I have been well broken on the wheel of life.”

Nevertheless she answered pleasantly, “Certainly, we will dispense with their services. We must be careful, however, not to repeat our visits too often with no third party present. ’Tis easy to set people talking.”

“No one could connect any scandal with your open, frank face and straightforward manner, I am sure. There is nothing to fear.”

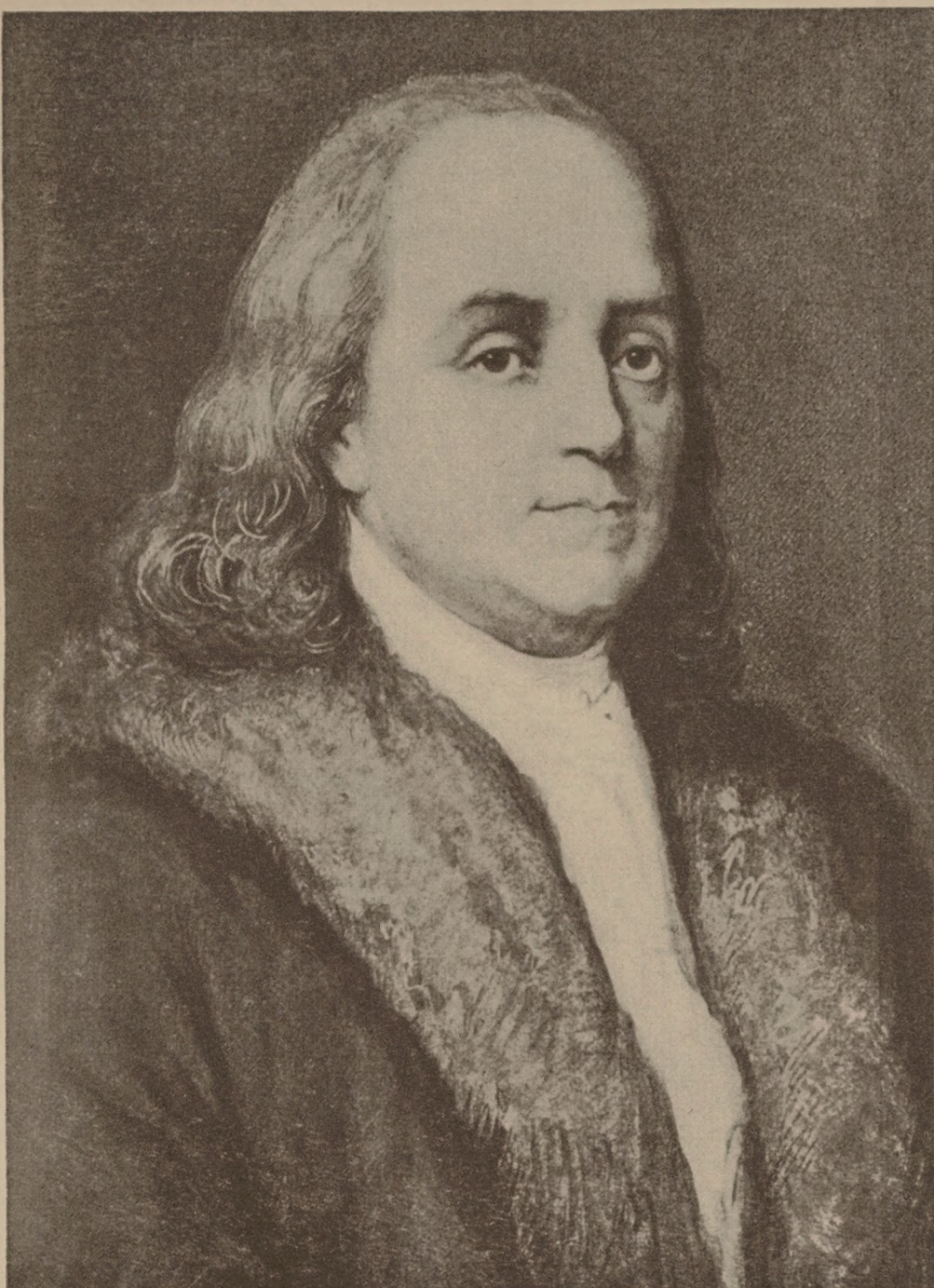
“How about Queen Victoria, who, whether as maid, wife, mother, queen or empress, has played her part in life with the utmost propriety?”

“Well, it being a foregone conclusion that people will gossip anyhow, let us do what we think is right and proper, and not bother ourselves about the small talk of small people. There can be no harm in two grey-haired friends spending occasionally a few hours together in places made sacred by human genius.”

“I will do as you wish,” she replied, soothingly, withdrawing her hand. Then, as she turned to go up the stairs leading to her pensione, she added, “You will doubtless find me to-morrow morning at six

o'clock seated among the early worshippers at Santa Croce; and, if the sun happens to be shining, you will have to give a sharp twitch to my sleeve to recall me. For always when he beams into that grand scene in the early morning, I am intoxicated with the transfiguration which takes place, and the strange, beautiful thoughts which enthrall my whole being."

Chapter Three



Benjamin Franklin

My friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and as I expected, every day, the same fate, I resolved to begin my work. I appeared to myself to be on my death-bed, for death was on every side of me, and I had no time to lose. This accounts for my writing at the time I did, and so nicely did the time and intention meet, that I had not finished the first part of the work more than six hours before I was arrested and taken to prison. The people of France were running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated in their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article of every man's creed, who has any creed at all—"I believe in God."

Thomas Paine in a letter to Samuel Adams.

CHAPTER THREE

Obedience bears a yoke on her shoulders, and lays her hand on a book.

MR. Smith experienced some difficulty in extricating himself from the enchantment of sleep at the time Mrs. Wells had named the evening before, for he had accustomed himself to the habits of the people with whom he associated, and had come to regard the early morning hours as more adapted to slumber than to activity. This morning, however, he remade his acquaintance with Florence baptised by the dew of early morning and glorified by the fresh, vigorous and gorgeous beams of the rising sun; her healthy, stout-hearted contadini everywhere, picturesque, alert, cheerful after their early frugal meal, and busy making ready to display and dispose of the fruits of their hard-won toil. Occasionally persons belonging to other classes of society were to be seen, sometimes with book in hand or hurrying along as if intent on catching a train while exquisite little birds with melodious throats were mingling their voices with the increasing hum of industry.

As Mr. Smith hurried along and felt the thrill of all this healthy, beautiful life and activity coursing through his veins, he fell to wondering if life did not, after all, offer her freshest, sanest, healthiest draught to the people frequently dubbed "common." He turned the query over and over in his mind, at first thinking that the money-making class had the best of it, notwithstanding the web of taxation and impecuniosity in which they were always cunningly entangled, and then again that the money-manipulating class was the one to be envied, for its almost unlimited power to squeeze the producers. But he reached his destination without making any headway toward a solution, feeling only that, if obliged to choose, the temptation would be great to range himself with the squeezers rather than with the squeezed.

The next moment, however, all these ugly and apparently vain questionings had taken their flight, for he found himself within the sacred precincts of Santa Croce; and, being strangely awed by the splendor and sublimity of the "rose burst" of the sun through the grand old windows, he involuntarily knelt for a moment as humbly as the most devout Catholic could have done. Then he rose and went forward to where a certain trim-looking woman sat quite by herself, at some distance from various groups of early worshippers well scattered in the fine old

cathedral. She was not kneeling as many were doing here and there, but sitting quite still, her eyes full of the glory of the scene and her mind occupied at that moment in recalling the lines of Richard Realf's "Indirection: "

Fair are the flowers and the children, but their subtle suggestion is
fairer;
Rare is the rose-burst of dawn, but the secret that clasps it is rarer;
Sweet the exultance of song, but the strain that precedes it is
sweeter;
And never was poem yet writ, but the meaning outmastered the
metre.

Never a daisy that grows, but a mystery guideth the growing;
Never a river that flows, but a majesty scepters the flowing;
Never a Shakespeare that soared, but a stronger than he did unfold
him;
Nor ever a prophet foretold, but a mightier than he hath foretold
him.

Back of the canvas that throbs, the painter is hinted and hidden;
Into the statue that breathes, the soul of the sculptor is bidden;
Under the joy that is felt, lie the infinite issues of feeling;
Crowning the glory revealed, is the glory that crowns the revealing.

Great are the symbols of being, but that which is symbolized is greater;
Vast the beheld and created, but vaster the inward creator;
Back of the sound broods the silence, back of the gift stands the
giving;
Back of the hand that receives, thrill the sensitive nerves of receiving.

Space is as nothing to spirit, the deed is outdone by the doing;
The heart of the wooer is warm, but warmer the heart of the wooing;
Up from the pits where they shiver, and up from the heights where
they shine,
Twin voices and shadows swim starward and the essence of life is
divine.

She had just reached the last line when he gave her sleeve the twitch as previously instructed, and immediately on perceiving who it was that had disturbed her, she held out her hand, saying without other greeting and with a deep sigh:

“Ah, the essence of life is divine, is it not? Truly, you are sure of it at this moment. Sit down and tell me you know it is the case! Being a woman I can only feel that it is divine.”

“Yes, I know it at this moment—but as soon as I go on 'Change and attempt to do a little business I shall doubt the fact, and I shall begin to wonder if after all the religious people who assert that there is a devil and that he bags most of the game for his own hellish purposes are not altogether correct.”

“That is because we still regard money as belonging to Caesar, because we do not realize that it is in essence divine and to be handled as a divine asset. But do come and let us see some of the very best work of Giotto, in the very best time to see it; that is by the light of the early morning sun.”

Proceeding slowly and with hushed tread as becomes those of the living privileged to enter a place hallowed by the genius of the mighty workers of the past, they made their way to the chapel of the Bardi della Liberta which Ruskin has asserted is the “most perfect little Gothic chapel in Italy, so far as I can

know or can hear. There is no other of the great time which has all its frescoes in their places."

"You would smile," she said as they reached the chapel, "if you knew the reason which made me, upon coming to Italy, give particular attention to the lives and doings of the Catholic priesthood."

"Having Yankee blood in me, and knowing your past history, I can guess," asserted Mr. Smith. "You wished to observe what men could accomplish who eschewed marriage altogether."

"You are right. I was so used to a priesthood who went to the extreme, and insisted on a plurality of wives, that for a change I found the opposite kind a novel and interesting study."

"What is your conclusion in the matter?" asked Mr. Smith as he took the opera glass extended to him and proceeded to examine the ceiling of "the most perfect little Gothic chapel in Italy," a graceful vaulted affair containing four medallions representing Giotto's favorite subject, St. Francis and His Three Angels.

"I should say the tendency of the plural wife priesthood is to coarsen and animalize those 'who live their religion;' while that of the no-wife priesthood, who also practise what they preach like St. Francis for instance, appears to me to become unduly feminine, not only in appearance but in reality,

and to be unable to entertain and practise healthy, all-round, common-sense views of life and human destiny. Be sure you give a good look at the medalion where 'Obedience bears a yoke on her shoulders, and lays a hand on a book,' " she added, with a light laugh.

"I suppose you want me to understand you have played that part lo, these many years!" he rejoined, as he turned his glass from St. Francis and began to examine with care the Saint's three commanding angels, Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity.

"Oh, I lay no claim to monopoly on that score. Plenty besides me have borne and still bear a yoke on their shoulders and lay hand on a book. And now that I no longer pledge obedience to cramping creeds or rites of the past, nor recognize any books as infallible—any more than the people who make them—I am not sure but that my present plight is more puzzling and difficult than my former one."

"How so?"

"Ah," with a sigh, "it was this way. When I practised simple obedience and thought the Bible—instead of the universe—the Word of God and that I should humbly accept the Apostle's or my husband's interpretation of it, I was never at a loss what to do. And sometimes when my heart felt crushed with demands for what seemed unnatural and stulti-

fying self-abnegation, I had the opinion that I was really enacting the holy part of a saint, if not that of a martyr, and that I would enjoy a greater degree of bliss in the next world to make amends for my woe in this. But now that with more light I have cast off the yoke of at least servile obedience to the Mormon priesthood, and can no longer lay my hand on any book of the past as an infallible guide for the present, I find myself in a singularly trying situation with apparently no infallibility in sight. Indeed it is plain to me now that I have blundered tremendously in the past through sheer ignorance, and that it is likely I shall blunder a lot more if I live long enough. Not a comfortable feeling to entertain, and sometimes I look back with regret and am tempted to seek shelter in the old paradise again where one has only to obey—and not to think, to experiment, sometimes to fall—perhaps to die alone, unloved—nay even reprobated.” Mrs. Wells furtively wiped her face which was wet with tears.

“Cara mia, pray don’t weep,” pleaded Mr. Smith, much moved. “You cannot die unloved, unwept while I live, for when you die I die too, so far as this world is concerned. Do you not believe me, Sarah?”

“Yes, yes; but you must not show that you care for me by putting your arm around me,” protested

the weeping woman as she resolutely turned away to give close attention to some other fresco of Giotto's, as though she was seeing them for the first time, when in truth she had looked at them so often—almost as often as she had scanned the frightful pictures of Satan and Hell in the old family Bible, or those equally terrifying in Fox's "Book of Martyrs."

From this it must not be inferred that these works by the great Giotto, which for so long a period were covered with whitewash and were only discovered in 1853 when they were, of course, "judiciously restored"—deal with terrifying subjects, for this is not the case. The reasons why Mrs. Wells had so often and affectionately glanced them over were, first, that at the beginning of her study of art and artists she had greatly admired the character of the wonderful Giotto and had pleased herself by examining every bit of his work whenever and wherever possible. The second reason why these frescoes were especially dear to her was because the artist was here representing his favorite subject, St. Francis, a character no less worthy of study and admiration perhaps than Giotto himself.

Now to obtain as comprehensive an idea of the life of St. Francis and in as few words as possible, one must go to Ruskin, who tells in "Mornings in Florence," that the little octagon Baptistery in the

centre of Florence, ten minutes' walk from Santa Croce, was the central building likewise of European Christianity; but that from the day this odd-looking Christian temple was finished, and for four hundred years, Christianity, though she did her best, her best came to very little—"when there rose up two men who vowed to God it should come to more. These two men were St. Francis and St. Dominic, the former an Apostle of Works, the latter of Faith; and that each sent a little company of disciples to teach and to preach in Florence: St. Francis in 1212, St. Dominic in 1220.

"The two little companies of priests, disciples, were settled, one ten minutes' walk east of the old Baptistry, the other five minutes' walk west of it. And after they had stayed quietly in such lodgings as were given them, preaching and teaching through most of the century, and had got Florence, as it were, heated through, she burst out into Christian poetry and architecture, of which you have heard much talk, burst into bloom of Arnolfe, Giotto, Dante, Orcagna, and the like persons, whose works you profess to have come to Florence that you may see and understand.

"Florence then, thus heated through, helped her teachers to build finer churches. The Dominicans, or White Friars, the Teachers of Faith, began their

church of St. Mary's in 1279. The Franciscans, or Black Friars, the teachers of Works, laid the first stone of this church of the Holy Cross (Santa Croce) in 1294. And the whole city laid the foundations of its new cathedral in 1298. The Dominicans designed their own building; but for the Franciscans and the town worked the first great master of Gothic art, Arnolfe, with Giotto at his side, and Dante looking on, and whispering sometimes a word to both.

“And here you stand beside the high altar of the Franciscans' church, under a vault of Arnolfe's building, with at least some of Giotto's colour still fresh on it, and in front of you, over the little altar, is the only reported authentic portrait of St. Francis, taken from life by Giotto's master. Yet I can hardly blame my two English friends for never looking in. Except in the early morning light, unless you understand the relations of Giotto to St. Francis, and of St. Francis to humanity, it will be of little interest.”

Doubtless it was due to the fact that the light was always so dim when Mr. Smith had strayed into Santa Croce, “just to look around a bit at the monuments and things,” that he had never even stepped into this famous chapel where, Ruskin declares, is to be seen (by early morning light) “developed Gothic, with Giotto in his consummate strength, and noth-

ing lost in form of the complete design," as Mrs. Wells reminded her companion.

"To my mind, Sarah, this is rather poor stuff," said Mr. Smith, after straining his eyes for some little time over the frescoes in which Mrs. Wells appeared to find so much satisfaction.

"Ah, but the light is too bad for you to see them well. We should have come sooner—or at least we should not have dilly-dallied in getting to them. Of course you know a lot about Giotto and love him, as anyone must who had given attention to him or to his work. Let us therefore glance for a moment at his work in the next chapel, the Peruzzi, where there are some frescoes depicting scenes in the lives of the two Johns. The light is a little stronger now—look quick!"

"Where?" said Mr. Smith, glancing at the various frescoes quite helpless and dazed, and making out little more than general outlines for the light had become dim again and his eyesight was so poor.

"Too bad! We cannot see them understandingly until the light is stronger. You see the sun is the Great Artist after all. Let us sit down a moment and learn if the darkness is not due to a passing cloud. Have you read what Ruskin says about Giotto?"

"No, not Ruskin, but the regular guidebooks, I have read what they say."

“Then I’ll venture to guess you know little about the real Giotto; your eyes being dim and the frescoes old and only to be properly appreciated by those who have first learned to love the artist. Let me read you a little about him from ‘Mornings in Florence.’ There are only a few people in the church now, and they so scattered and far away we shall not disturb their devotions. Shall I?”

“Certainly! and we will sit right down here on the steps of the Peruzzi chapel, so as to be ready to see the famous pictures if the light is turned on again this morning.”

Mr. Smith was only too glad of an excuse to rest a bit, not being accustomed to so much activity at so unreasonable an hour.

“But first I will read you a few words about St. Francis, since for so many years his gospel was in some respects my own belief. And, I think I but do myself justice to say that I lived what I believed to be true as earnestly as he did, yet I deserve no credit, for my sex has been bred to obedience, chastity, work, so long that habit has become second nature. ‘Now the gospel of Works, according to St. Francis, lay in three things:—You must work without money, and be poor. You must work without pleasure, and be chaste. You must work according to orders, and be obedient.’”

“What is the matter with that gospel, Sarah—for a woman, I mean. You read it a little impatiently, as if you no longer quite endorsed it.”

“Neither do I! At least, I think it has been sufficiently practised by women in a blind way. With the comparatively small number of your sex who chose to live this gospel it was different. They accepted it from choice, from sincere conviction, after due deliberation.”

“Then you would no longer be willing to work without money and be poor, to work without pleasure and be chaste, to work according to orders and be obedient; eh, Sarah?”—Mr. Smith re-adjusted his glasses and gave Mrs. Wells a scrutinizing, quiz-zical glance.

“No, I think not. Not now. I have lived that sort of life so long—so long! And I reaped only bitter tears and increasing despair. I will tell you about it later on. Let me read you a little about Giotto, just to show you what a healthy man he was and how, though he worked for the Franciscans, he probably got a fair price for his work; and as he loved his work he certainly took pleasure in it. Next, as he took an all-round, common-sense view of life, he was, I take it, healthily chaste; not degenerately so. As to the manner in which he should paint his wonderful frescoes, he certainly took no orders from

anybody, not even from his great teacher Cimabue, but did them as his own nature, God-lit, prompted. But hear what Ruskin says; he can tell you how this first great painter of life, as it is, wrought:—‘Observe, then, the special character of Giotto among the great painters of Italy, his being a practical person. Whatever other men dreamed of, he did. He could work in mosaic; he could work in marble; he could paint; and he could build; and all thoroughly—a man of supreme faculty, supreme common-sense. Accordingly, he ranges himself at once among the disciples of the Apostle of Works, and spends most of his time in the same apostleship.’ ”

“Is that all you are going to read to me of this Giotto who seems to have found in you and Ruskin such sincere admirers, after he has lain in his grave a half dozen centuries? ”

“I will read you some more, since you seem pleased, and then, if you desire, we will see more of Giotto’s work.”

Mrs. Wells turned over several pages with evident reluctance, thinking to herself, “It is all so beautiful, so truly said, how can I skip any of it? But I must do so, for to be tedious in these days is to be stupid. But I must read this. It is so pretty.—You know the story of Joachim and Anna, I hope? ”

Mrs. Wells paused, and glanced at Mr. Smith to

see if he looked pleased or bored, which made him think she was not reading at all, but asking him a question. Accordingly he replied, with some embarrassment:

“Can’t say that I do. It is a good while since I have read the Bible much. Though I, too, have been a disciple of the gospel of work, it has been a kind of work that had to be done up-to-date, or it was no good.”

“It does not matter,” replied Mrs. Wells, smiling to herself at his mistake, “for even Ruskin seems to be rusty in respect to its ins and outs, and he does not venture to keep his readers waiting while he tells it. He declares that all we need know before examining a certain fresco of Giotto’s, which we must see when we are rested, is ‘that here is an old husband and an old wife, meeting again by surprise after losing each other, and being in great fear; meeting at the place where they were told by God each to go, without knowing what was to happen there.’

“‘So they rushed into one another’s arms, and kissed each other.’ ‘No,’ says Giotto, ‘not that.’

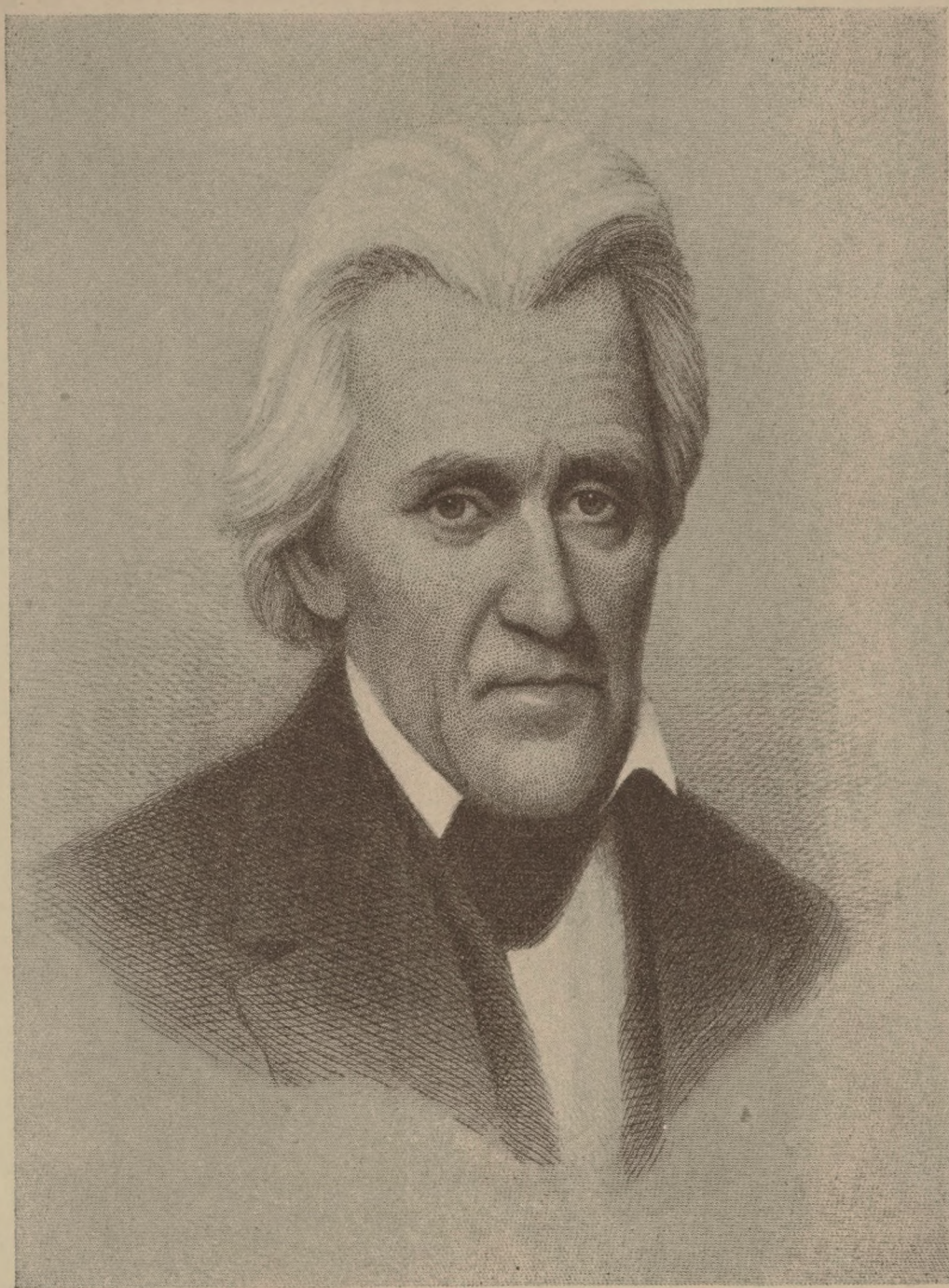
“‘They advanced to meet, in a manner conformable to the strictest laws of composition; and with their draperies cast into folds which no one until Raphael could have arranged better.’

“‘No,’ says Giotto, ‘not that.’

“ ‘ St Anne has moved quickest; her dress just falls into folds, sloping backwards enough to tell you so much. She has caught St. Joachim by his mantle, and draws him to her, softly, by that. St. Joachim lays his hand under her arm, seeing she is like to faint, and holds her up. They do not kiss each other—only look into each other’s eyes. And God’s angel lays his hand on their heads.’ ”

There was a peculiarity about Mrs. Wells’ voice when she read anything that greatly pleased her or deeply touched her heart. It seemed of its own accord to enter into the spirit of her feeling and to vibrate in unison, and all quite without effort on her part. Indeed, the clear, tender exquisiteness of her tones as she finished this beautiful description from Ruskin was as great a surprise to her as to her companion, and as inspirational as the deep tender look he gave her, when she paused.

Chapter Four



Andrew Jackson

Though I appear a sort of wanderer, the married state has not a sincerer friend than I am. It is the harbour of human life, and is, with respect to the things of this world, what the next world is to this. It is home; and that word conveys more than any other word can express. For a few years we may glide along the tide of youthful single life and be wonderfully delighted; but it is a tide that flows but once, and what is still worse, it ebbs faster than it flows, and leaves many a hapless voyager aground. I am one, you see, that have experienced the fate I am describing. I have lost my tide; it passed by while every thought of my heart was on the wing for the salvation of my dear America, and I have now as contentedly as I can, made myself a little bower of willows on the shore that has the solitary resemblance of a home. Should I always continue the tenant of this home, I hope my female acquaintance will ever remember that it contains not the churlish enemy of their sex, not the inaccessible cold-hearted mortal, nor the capricious tempered oddity, but one of the best and most affectionate of their friends.

Extract from a Letter of Thomas Paine to a Bride.

CHAPTER FOUR

He was a man of public spirit, and public spirit can never be wholly immoral, since its essence is care for the common good.—
GEORGE ELIOT.

THE next morning when Mrs. Wells reached the grand old Palazzo Pitti, she perceived Mr. Smith standing, with bared head and immovable as a statue, in front of its Cyclopean structure. It was now her turn to pull his sleeve in order to gain his attention, so absorbed was he in contemplating this magnificent building. Without wholly removing his glance from the object of his admiration, he shook her hand warmly, saying at the same time, with enthusiasm:

“That is the way to build houses for human beings. The Devil himself could not build a better one, so well proportioned, solid and grand it is. No flimsy fire-trap that!”

“Why do you say the Devil could not build a better one?”

“Because, the Devil, having charge of the Great Majority, according to the orthodox, must be a past

master in the art of building; and if ambition be one of his distinguishing traits, then certainly Luca Pitti was inspired of Satan to build this imposing palace. At one time Luca was the powerful opponent of the Medici, and it was during the period of his great power that he decided to build this palace, the windows of which he declared should be as big as the doors of the Medici palace."

"It is wonderful how many of our finest acquisitions we owe to the spirit of ambitious rivalry," commented Mrs. Wells. "I don't exactly see how we could get on without the Devil, who appears very often to be the Spirit of Progress in disguise. But, caro mio, it is evident we shall not get on with our own work to-day if we continue to spend our time gazing at this remarkable building, which we can easily imagine holding its own with Father Time."

"We will walk on then," acquiesced Mr. Smith, as he obediently followed her through the entrance of the palace at the corner, where, having obtained a "permesso," they pursued their way along the fine, broad avenue leading to the grotto.

They lingered before this quaint artistic structure only a few moments, for they had often gazed upon the picturesque and novel beauty of its singular construction, as well as puzzled over the unfinished statues of Michelangelo. The statues of Apollo

and Ceres by Bandinelli, imitator of the great Angelo and no more remarkable than imitative work is apt to be, received scant attention from these two people, who were becoming in their old age connoisseurs in art.

The beautifully graded and uphill terraces were not so easily mounted as the couple could have wished. In fact, Mr. Smith was obliged to stop now and then to get his breath, while Mrs. Wells skillfully covered the ravages of time by telling amusing anecdotes, and dilating upon these fine terraces, laid out by Tribolo under Cosimo I, in 1550, and extended by Buontalenti, until their umbrageous bowers furnished rare places of retreat for the poet, lover and artist to dream in, and certain open spaces commanded most charming views of "la bella Firenze."

This small party of two followed along the main avenue which arises to the Amphitheatre, so called because it was once used for festivities of the court. It comprises a large open space enclosed by oak hedges, beneath which rows of seats ascend regularly, the highest surmounted by a row of marble statues alternated with large antique vases. An Egyptian obelisk covered with hieroglyphics, and an ancient oblong basin of grey granite, adorn the centre.

"Ah, suppose we rest a little here, and perhaps

you will give me the promised look backward over your life, so that we can come to some definite understanding in regard to our future," exclaimed Mrs. Wells, as she dropped into one of the long stone seats.

"Yes, I would like you to know the leading facts of my life for two reasons: that we may be the better able to come to some conclusion as to our future course, and because I wish to forestall any vicious slander which may reach you through disinterested friends." The last words were spoken in tones full of bitterness, accompanied by a satirical smile.

"It will be hard for you, I fear," said Mrs. Wells, laying her hand for a moment sympathetically on one of his which idly clasped his knee.

"Hard, yes, I should say so; that is, the part I shall relate to you this morning to give you a fair idea of the sort of man I have been in my domestic relations. A woman usually judges a man by the way he has played that part of his life. Does she not?"

"I am afraid you are right," admitted Mrs. Wells with a laugh.

"That part, I must admit, I have played illy."

"But let us hear how you have played it," urged Mrs. Wells in cheerful tones, as her companion stopped short, seemingly unable to continue.

“ Well, when I was what would be considered in these times a mere boy—I was just eighteen—there came to our rude village on the outskirts of civilization in the great West, a preacher and his family, which consisted of a wife, several small children and a very pious young woman who became the village schoolmistress. In those early days courtship was a simple matter; a marriageable woman came to town where there was a great preponderance of my own sex, and was quickly surrounded by a circle of marriageable men in eager rivalry for her hand; though we were, without exception, a rough type, ‘ chock-full ’ of energy and go, and just the sort to rush things in a new country. I was as proud as Lucifer when this pious young woman picked me out as ‘ the most refined of the lot,’ and decided, not without deep searching of the heart and much wrestling with God in prayer, that I would do. To win my suit I had painted my boyish conversion during some revival meetings more dramatically than truth warranted, thereby duly preparing for myself a fearful retribution, and for her a bitter, lifelong disappointment; for we were scarcely settled in our new home when she discovered, like Madame Guyon before her, that the house of her husband was to be for her a house of mourning.”

“ Well, well! I am impatient to hear! ” broke

in Mrs. Wells, as Mr. Smith seemed to have stopped for good, he made such a long pause.

“It was this way,” he continued finally. “She began to doubt whether I had ever been deeply convicted of Sin and truly converted, because for a time I refused to conduct family worship morning and evening. I will not dwell on the agonizing talks we had over this terrible situation. I tried at first, as gently as I could, to make Lydia—my wife’s name—understand I was not accustomed to praying aloud, and that I was then too old to begin that sort of religious performance. She said she would show me how; and for a fortnight she herself read, each morning and evening, a very long portion of Holy Writ and followed it up with explanatory remarks. Then we knelt down, and she prayed with wonderful facility, but for a very long time—so long that too much of the day was consumed by these religious exercises for an American business man.

“At the close of this pious fortnight she again presented the Bible to me, and insisted that now, having shown me how to lead in family worship, I ought to do so, as befitted the head of the household. To gratify my young wife I said, with assumed courage, ‘all right, I will do the best I can!’ Accordingly, after reading the portion of scripture selected for me by Lydia, we knelt down; but being painfully em-

barrassed—for I knew what a keen, theological critic I had by my side—I could think of nothing proper to say, my own way of praying having been so different from hers.

“Finally, the pause became so embarrassing to both of us, that Lydia urged entreatingly: Open your mouth, dear, and let the Lord fill it. Thus admonished, I blurted out the only words I could catch hold of: ‘O, Lord give us a little common sense, Amen.’”

“Well, what happened after that?” asked Mrs. Wells with amused interest. She was sufficiently acquainted with the orthodox mind to be sure that a domestic tragedy followed on the heels of such a heterodox prayer.

Mr. Smith sighed deeply “It was very unfortunate,” he said, “that I had used the words ‘common sense,’ for my wife immediately associated them with the Evil One, her preacher having proved to the satisfaction of his church that Thomas Paine was a child of darkness, of sin, of Satan.

“When I saw the effect of my words on her perturbed countenance and realized what I had done, I only made matters worse by saying, ‘Pray, my dear Lydia, forget the dreadful things your preacher said the other day about the life of Tom Paine and dwell on the fact that this same man did more to launch the

New World on a career of Liberty, Progress and Prosperity than any other human being. Why even John Quincy Adams admitted that Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense" crystallized public opinion, and was really the first factor in bringing about the Revolution.' Then I added, 'It's still a mooted question whether it was Thomas Jefferson or Thomas Paine who wrote our glorious Declaration of Independence, though it is my opinion that it required both the Thomases to get up such a wonderful asset of Liberty.'

"Lydia's countenance did not lighten as I had hoped. 'I know or care little about politics,' she said. 'The one thing needful to know is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' Then she proceeded to assure me that it was plain that I, too, was a child of darkness and subject to the Evil One, and insisted that we kneel again, when she prayed in a manner that must have rivaled Savonarola himself."

"Ah, I begin to understand why you dislike that ascetic, but terrible monk so much," cheerfully interposed Mrs. Wells.

"Yes, Lydia, like Savonarolo with his fierce trinity, had a mania for reading and meditating on the most vindictive passages of what she was pleased to call 'The Word of God.' At length the portions of Scripture selected for family worship, as well as

her own prayers, became so depressing that I finally refused to have anything more to do with 'family prayers,' and thereafter Lydia regarded me as a reprobate of the most incorrigible type. Although she confined her reading mostly to 'The Word of God,' believing it contained all the knowledge required for human needs, she occasionally read in the biography of John Wesley, and developed a great sympathy for him for various reasons, perhaps the chief being that he, like herself, had wedded disastrously.

"Our lack of sympathy in religious matters acted as a blight on our whole domestic life; for so long as a person believes you are a child of Darkness, a co-worker with his Satanic Majesty, he naturally thinks that everything you do is inspired of the devil. We therefore discovered, in no great while, that we could not agree in respect to anything, and a chilly sort of politeness rapidly supplanted tenderness, excepting when we had a violent contention over something in connection with the children, whom we both loved exceedingly and with the lavish affection which estranged parents concentrate upon their offspring.

"In respect to the rearing of these children we were extremely unfortunate. We lost most of them almost as quickly as they came, and at the end of ten years had but two left, though my wife had suc-

cessfully emulated Mother Wesley in bearing a child each year. In still another respect she imitated this remarkable woman; she began betimes to break the wills of the poor innocents who remained to us for a year or more, until they learned to fear the rod before they could toddle, and by that time had likewise learned to cry softly. In fact, they were quickly taught by my resolute wife to conduct themselves with the utmost propriety, to eat and drink, pray, play or take their medicine dutifully, and in all respects to conduct themselves after the manner of miniature saints.

“Sad to relate, I was the only one in our family who ever made a rumpus, and occasionally I made a scene about the children that would have caused the hair of almost any other woman to stand on end, but not so with Lydia, for the angrier I grew the more serene and saint-like became her expression and manner. As for speech, she never deigned to reply under those circumstances, but there were times when she was what would be called in these days ‘erotically emotional,’ when she would weep and groan and pray almost the whole night through.

“I soon observed that these extremely hysterical seasons took place when a revival was in progress; so, when I heard that the religious people were preparing for a revival, I knew very well what was

coming to me. At such times Lydia would not only pray for the conversion of the whole world, with unceasing fervor and deep travail of spirit, but she would plead in an especially irritating manner for her dear husband who dwelt in such thick darkness and was utterly lost, unless Christ, in His infinite mercy and pity, would snatch him like a brand from the burning."

Mr. Smith paused a moment and then said apologetically:

"I am not telling you this exactly as it was, because it all happened a good while ago, and my memory about some things is poor."

"You are doing very well. I have seen several Lydias, male and female, in my day," returned Mrs. Wells, encouragingly.

"Not like mine. God forbid! I think only the sturdiest sort of person could have survived what was my portion during the various revival seasons of those ten years. Imagine a man, worn with the busy cares of the day to the dropping point, fallen into a sound slumber, only to be awakened by the return of his wife late at night from meeting when he knows there will be no rest——"

"For the wicked," interrupted Mrs. Wells.

"For the wicked," dutifully repeated Mr. Smith, "until dawn, when I was in the habit of getting up,

though sometimes I arose much earlier. During all these hours Lydia would carry on in a most terrible way for a man a bit sensitive. She would come to my bedside and weep and pray and beg me to come to Jesus now, since now was the accepted time. I would try in every way I could think of to pacify her and to get her to come to bed. Sometimes I would try to reason with her. I would tell her that it would not do at all for everybody to be like Jesus, that God had seen fit to make us all different, and that each should do his own work and, as far as possible, in his own way. 'But it is the Atonement you ought to accept,' she would urge and threaten that if I did not we would lose all our children; that whoever did not accept Jesus Christ and trust in the salvation prepared by Him and accepted of God, would not only be damned everlastingly, but would meet with terrible afflictions in this world.

"As Lydia had the Scriptures almost by heart—so it seemed to me who had to listen to so much of it in the small hours of the night—she was never at a loss for texts which she thought particularly applicable to my case. Next to Revelations, I dreaded her starting out on various portions of the Old Testament, especially Leviticus, beginning with the fourteenth verse. This verse and the following, to the number of a dozen, she would repeat in the most

blood-curdling fashion, dwelling with peculiar emphasis on the parts relating to the burning ague—something very prevalent among us at certain seasons of the year; the robbing of the children, the plagues, the wild beasts, the sword, all of which calamities we occasionally suffered in those times, when visitations of wild beasts, Indians, locusts and one thing and another contributed to make life an uncertain and dangerous business. But I must say, that while I never quailed before either wild beast or wilder man, there were times when I quailed in the night, before the tearful eyes of my wife, and actually quaked when I heard her groan forth her prayers for my salvation as she knelt by my bedside, hours at a time.”

“I am afraid I should have been tempted to please a person so deadly in earnest and so beside herself with fear in my behalf,” interposed Mrs. Wells. “I should have pretended to be saved in the way she—of the orthodox, rather—thought necessary.”

“It was a temptation to yield and let Lydia run me spiritually, as you say. Again and again have I accompanied my wife to revival meetings with the understanding that if the Spirit moved me—I was always careful to put in that proviso—I would rise for prayers. But if you could have seen how they carried on in those early, rude times you would not

blame me for my stubborn resistance to become a party to their methods. Why, words fail me to describe the confusion that took place in our town and the surrounding country while a spirited revival was in progress. All regular labor was suspended. Everybody made it a business to go to meeting to get converted, or if already in the 'fold' to help bring in the 'ungodly.' At some of the meetings I attended there would be hysterical laughing, crying, shouting, sprawling, fainting, all taking place at the same time, until one wondered if the people were not possessed by something of a diabolic nature, rather than a baptism of the Holy Spirit as was claimed."

"One night in particular stands out most vividly in my memory. The preacher was a noisy, energetic dark-skinned man with a heavy black beard, a thick black mane of hair and eyes like burning coals. The burden of his fiery talk that night was to the effect that the people were all damn'd, damn'd, damn'd! If you think this sort of preaching was not effective, you should have seen the results before midnight was reached. They were so thick on the floor—'spiritually slain,' he said—that you could scarcely take a step for fear of treading on somebody's hand or foot or hair. Some lay perfectly quiet and looked as though they were dead; some wept, and many were

groaning or making strange, unearthly noises. Several of those who were in the 'Ark of Safety' approached me and either pleaded and quoted Scripture or knelt by my side and prayed aloud that my heart of stone might be exchanged for one of flesh. My wife was one of these, but she finally lost patience with my backwardness in asking for prayers and declared, that since I would not flee from destruction, I would certainly be turned into salt, like Lot's wife. Being heartily sick of all I saw, I told her I thought that condition was preferable to being turned into a damned fool."

"And what did your wife do then?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Wells, who evidently thought a remark of that character was calculated to bring on a crisis of some kind.

"She looked at me in a most dramatic way for a while, as though her grief and anger were too great for speech, then she said, 'My poor Thomas you will be among those who will cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on you and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.' Having spoken thus, she did not wait to hear my reply, which was to the effect that I thought my fate was to be turned into salt, but hurried away to find a more hopeful field of labor. As both our children were ill I went home, leaving my

wife to the care of a clerk who was present and still in the possession of his wits. At this time my position was even less enviable than ordinarily. My wife was not less alarmed over the condition of our children than myself, but she thought they would only be spared to us if I 'accepted Christ,' as she called it, hence, partly, the fanatical religious persistence with which she pestered me day and night.

"In addition to domestic troubles I had some of a political nature only less harassing. I was running for an office which I wanted, not for the money there was in it—being always fortunate in financial matters—but really because my friends thought I was the best person for the place, and because I would have liked to have played a part in the fortunes of this particular swift-growing young city, something like the Citizen Medici played in Florence. But in allowing my name to be put forward I had not foreseen that right in the thick of the campaign a revival would start up which would carry everything before it.

"Under any circumstances a political campaign is an indecent affair and damaging to a person's character and morals, since to secure success one must pull wires and lose something of that straightforward, inborn independence of character which each man should prize as his highest heritage from heaven.

This particular campaign was of a very scandalous character, for the religious element of the town and country had set itself to the task of defeating me, on account of my being 'a shrewd Godless infidel,' as they put it. As my character for honesty and probity was unimpeachable, and they could not assail my business record while living in their midst with any hope of success, they went to work to dig up my past; and here I must say their efforts met with the reward they fondly desired, and, as if to help them in their endeavors to down me, both our remaining children died."

"So sad! so very sad!" said Mrs. Wells, with tears in her voice as well as in her modest brown eyes.

"Yes, it was a Job-like crisis; everything connected with me rushing to destruction, and I myself so harassed night and day that I began to feel it would be a relief if the mountains and rocks would fall on me and end the whole business, so far as this world was concerned, anyway."

"But what did the church people succeed in digging up?" asked Mrs. Wells, with feminine eagerness.

"They dug up the story that I was married to my poor little innocent sister and whispered it about with nauseous details, showing the inventive dramatic

genius of a desert priest," replied Mr. Smith with some heat, recalling the bitterness of the past.

"Of course they defeated you. But was there any truth in the scandalous tale?"

"I cannot say for certain, though I set two of the shrewdest lawyers in that section to find out. They easily learned that my parents had been slain by the Indians, and that I had been put in charge of strangers while an infant. One of the lawyers got on the track of a story that my mother had given birth to a girl before wedlock with my father, and that the result of her clandestine love had been placed in charge of a Methodist minister and his wife, who brought up the little waif as their own, and gave her their own name."

"What did your wife say to all this?"

"She was furiously angry and said I merely wished to shirk the responsibility of being the cause of my children's death, by persisting in being a Godless reprobate. I was of the opinion that there was truth in this scandal. At any rate I made up my mind that I would not be the cause of terrible suffering to any more poor little innocents, if I could help it, so I told her I would go away, leaving her well fixed, of course, and begin life over again. I advised her to procure a divorce in due time, and begin life again herself, and cautioned her to be sure

this time to marry a person whose conviction of sin and conversion was of the clearest description."

"Common sense advice under the circumstances," nodded Mrs. Wells.

"One would have thought so," sighed Mr. Smith, "but otherwise thought Lydia, to whom the very word 'divorce' always struck dismay. Then I said that perhaps by spending still more time we could be able to prove that she was my sister and simply have the marriage annulled."

"What did she say to that?"

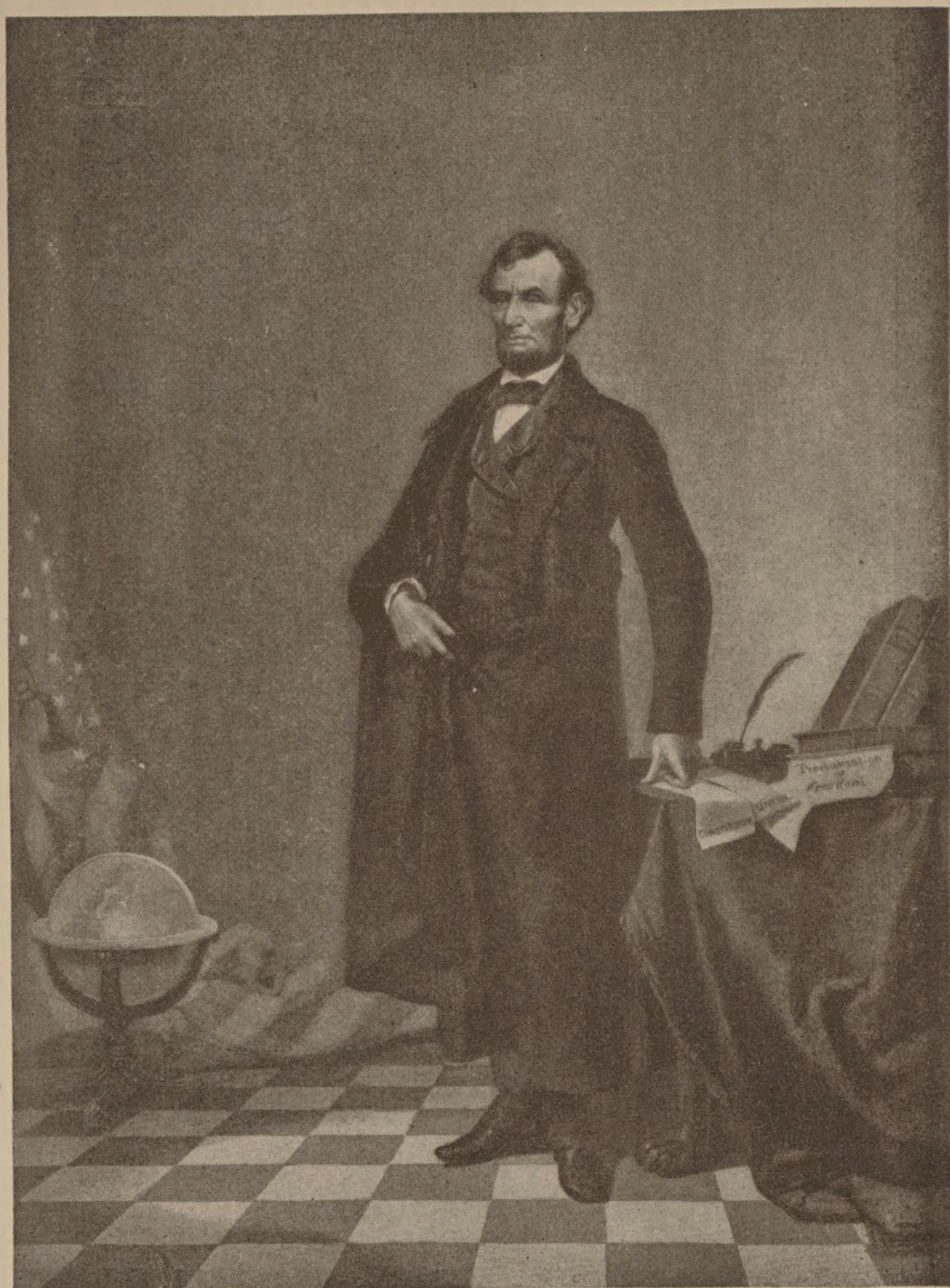
"She was even more furious over this proposition. 'What! prove her an illegitimate child? Destroy the character of her mother?' She would never admit that one mother bore us, for a moment. 'The idea,' she said, 'of one mother giving birth to a religious person like myself, and a Godless Infidel like you—impossible!' I suggested to her that we were not more unlike than Jacob and Esau, who were not only born of the same father and mother but were twins; but not to tire you, the upshot was that I left her with the bulk of my possessions, and started off to find new fortunes in some new wilderness of the great West. Pray let us have a bite to eat. To go over the past is a mighty hard business. I sometimes hope there is a sort of river Styx we pass through

occasionally which blots it all out and leaves us only the net result."

"Or at least, if not blotted out, will show that all this travail and pain was a needed part of our education, which, when sufficiently dimmed by time will form a romantic feature of our history," suggested Mrs. Wells, who, proceeded temptingly to arrange the lunch she had thoughtfully prepared, while Mr. Smith said wearily:

"Perhaps, perhaps; but now I never glance back, even upon my poor successes, if I can help myself, lest the despairing failures trail along with them and make me wish I had never been born."

Chapter Five



Abraham Lincoln

The earliest American plea in behalf of Woman was made by Thomas Paine in August, 1775, a part of which is as follows :

“ Affronted in one country by polygamy, which gives them their rivals for inseparable companions ; enslaved in another by indissoluble ties, which often join the gentle to the rude, and sensibility to brutality : even in countries where they may be esteemed most happy, constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods, robbed of freedom of will by the laws, the slaves of opinion, which rules them with absolute sway, and construes the slightest appearance into guilt, surrounded on all sides by judges who are at once their tyrants and seducers, and who after having prepared their faults, punish every lapse with dishonour—nay, usurp the right of degrading them on suspicion !—who does not feel for the tender sex ? Yet such I am sorry to say is the lot of woman over the whole earth. Man in regard to them, in all climates and in all ages, has been either an insensible husband or an oppressor ; but they have sometimes experienced the cold and deliberate oppression of pride, and sometimes the violent and terrible tyranny of jealousy. When they are not beloved they are nothing ; and when they are they are tormented. They have almost equal cause to be afraid of indifference and love. Over three quarters of the globe Nature has placed them between contempt and misery.

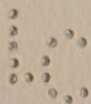
“ Even among people where beauty receives the highest homage we find men who would deprive the sex of every kind of reputation. ‘ The most virtuous woman,’ says a celebrated Greek, ‘ is she who is least talked of.’ That morose man, while he imposes duties on women would deprive them of the sweets of public esteem, and in exacting virtues from them would make it a crime to aspire to honour.” * * *

CHAPTER FIVE

Woman in fact represents or ought to represent, the principles of Divine Love. She is intended to convey to man vibrations proceeding straight from the very heart of Being, divine vibrations without which he can in no real sense be said to exist.—GEORGE BARLOW.

“THESE seats are really very comfortable, considering they are hewn out of stone and on so large a scale,” Mrs. Wells said cheerily after their little lunch had been dispatched. This amphitheatre must seat a couple of thousand people. What think you?”

“I should guess that number might be seated here, and comfortably,” answered Mr. Smith, making a rapid mental calculation. “Yes, the Medici knew how to make things comfortable. They believed in good living and they were far from being ascetic monks. Two of the later ones, it is true, tried to play the part of Popes, and several were Cardinals; but as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus who knew not where to lay His head, I can’t say I think them a success. Nevertheless, always and everywhere, they stood for the arts which make for peace,



and beauty, and for wide as well as high thinking—and generous living. No emasculated ascetics among them!”

“How about Catherine de Medici?” asked Mrs. Wells with a sly smile; “did she stand for peace?”

“Only the force of circumstances made her seem an exception to the rule. She was in possession of information that a new rising of Protestants was to take place, when there would be bloody rioting, if not an overturning of the government and all that a revolution entailed. She simply acquiesced in the forestalling of such an event by adopting the only certain means of prevention. The Medici never resorted to extreme measures unless absolutely sure that only extreme measures would answer. When a whole people are brutally drunk with fanaticism, brutal measures of coercion must be adopted.”

“Nevertheless, had I been in Catherine’s place, I should have preferred to have been massacred with all my family and friends, rather than consent to deal such an underhanded, bloody blow to so many people,” declared Mrs. Wells, emphatically.

“It was a case of one set of mad, persecuting fanatics making away with another set equally crazy. If the Catholics had not got in their work when they did, the Protestants would soon have been masters of the situation, for their secret plot of bloody revolu-

tion was about ripe for execution, and their swiftly augmenting numbers already a dangerous menace. Catherine——”

“Pray, pray, caro mio, let us leave further discussion of questionable methods to those Medici intermarried with aristocrats or royalty for another time. You see I am very anxious to determine what I should do next. So please let me hear what further things connected with your past life you want me to know.”

“I see, I see, I am rambling, as usual. I forget where I left off,” he said, vainly toying with a portion of the heavy fringe of the soft, warm shawl Mrs. Wells had laid down before they seated themselves.

“You stopped your recital just when you were about to make a new beginning in a new wilderness.”

“Yes, yes, I remember now. How wretched and despairing I felt, when I dragged myself to the graveyard for the last time to take leave of the little row of graves, which my wife to the last insisted had been the price of my stony heart and my continued refusal to accept Christ as a mediator between an angry God and myself. I remember how out of patience she used to get when I would deny as absurd that He who was no less Infinite Justice than Infinite Love, and no less Infinite Wisdom than Love, should ever be angry with His children or that He should cause

a world to evolve in such a manner that one or two of the little creatures on it could seriously interfere with its predestined order and the gradual unfoldment of the human family."

"Ah, but do let me hear how you got on in the new wilderness," insisted Mrs. Wells. "You are no farther than the graveyard containing the mortal bodies of your little ones."

"True. I went there to weep and pray in my own way. On reaching the place I found our nurse had preceded me there. She was prostrate upon the grave of little Vina who had died but a few weeks previous. She was quite still and motionless; and for a few moments I feared she was dead, so cold and lifeless did she appear with her face close to the cold earth, near a heap of dead flowers. None of us had been there since the last burial had taken place—for we had all been too ill, too much overcome with grief and trouble. Having gotten a little strength she had come there to grieve and to find a grave, too, so she told me, but when I had raised her to a sitting posture and had chafed her hands a bit, I prevailed on her to take a dose of some tonic medicine I happened to have with me and we fell to talking as she revived under its influence. She confessed to me that in ministering in my home and to my children she had come to love me. So odd, was it not?"

"No, I don't think so," said Mrs. Wells, as her companion seemed again to be lost in the past.

"That is what she said,"—he continued after a time—"that she loved me as only a woman can love, once in a lifetime, a mature woman like herself. 'What ought I to do under the circumstances?' I queried, as she lay passively in my arms, as lovingly and trustfully as my little ones were wont to do. Hitherto I had not stopped to consider the matter of love in connection with her, but now I thought seriously and tried to look deeply into my heart, and I found it not difficult to reach the conclusion that if I did not already love her most tenderly, it would be quite easy to do so—she was such a noble character, and had been so devoted to me and mine.

"However, having made one serious matrimonial blunder I was not going to be in a hurry to risk another. So I said, 'Listen, Lily.' A faint 'Yes,' came in response. 'You are ill and unstrung; so is Lydia, and so am I. In truth, we are all of us about half insane with what we have had to undergo, what with terrible sickness, mad religion, nasty politics and hellish tongue-tattle, I am sure that each of us needs rest, a change of environment, a new sort of life, so that we can get back to our healthy state again. I, myself, though a fairly strong man, am so run down

that I find it easier to act in an insane, passionate, irresponsible manner, than to try and take hold of things by the right handle. I have left my wife in possession of plenty of means so that she can do what she likes with herself—no longer with me, for I have left her for good. Whether she will ever procure a divorce from me is doubtful; so that, if we take one another in the hope of rendering our lives more satisfactory and more complete, I suspect we shall have to do so in what is called an unlawful union. It is my conviction that I shall be happy to form this union, if, after a year of rest and recuperation and an entire severance from me, you still feel that you love me and are willing to pay the price which unlawful wedlock always demands? ”

She made no reply to these remarks for a little while, and I said nothing for I wished not to hasten the decision of her mind and heart at so critical a moment in our lives. “The time will seem long,” she faltered at last. “But true love can afford to wait,” I said in reply.

“Finally she agreed to my proposal to wait a whole year and to employ the time in regaining the health she had lost in attendance upon my family. I made her accept a sufficient sum of money to go to Europe in the meantime, for she was a woman of artistic tastes, and she had a married sister in Florence

at that time. As for myself—I went into a new American wilderness to begin life over again.

“At the end of the year my wife was still stubbornly set against the idea of a divorce, and to have procured one myself I should have been obliged to prove the criminally-near relationship of my wife and myself, and the probable pre-marital immorality of our parents. I could not make up my mind to take this radical course, though if I had it to do over again I should do the fair thing by my sensitive Lily, cost what it might.

“Receiving word from her that she was as firm in her love as ever, and ready to enter into an informal alliance if a regular union was impossible, I started east, determined to talk the whole matter over with her and her near relatives before we made our final choice; for the more I thought the matter over, the more I feared that so delicate and sensitive a creature was unequal to such an ordeal. Moreover, everything conspired from now on to hurry us into the only sort of union possible at this critical time, for even my own home papers in the new wilderness contained more than one humorous reference to the reason which made it so necessary for me to go east, in which they assured their readers that, under the circumstances, nobody could take my place or could stand up satisfactorily by the side of a certain eastern belle

and make the responses expected on such an occasion. I contradicted nothing; and when we put in an appearance in the—at that time—newest West, everybody received us with open arms and Lily became a great favorite, for she was of a very lovable disposition as well as beautiful to look upon.

“Of course we had no children. I held the opinion that an informal marriage should be a childless one, for Society is so cruel to ‘illegitimate children,’ as they are called. Hence I encouraged Lily to engage in affairs connected with the well-being of the poor in the community, and she was for a long time president of one strong, energetic philanthropic society, and frequently the acting secretary for others. I think every poor child in the city loved her, and certainly every girl who had loved more impetuously than wisely was more or less indebted to her kind and helpful influence. This happy state of affairs might possibly have continued to our—or Lily’s—dying day, but fortune having smiled on us in various ways, I grew too secure and ventured once more into politics.”

“Ah, I see how it was; but tell me. Only it will be so hard for you to do so.” Mrs. Wells clasped his hand in hers as if to impart courage and strength to him.

“The cause at issue was in essence the old one,

—always on the boards and never laid—the struggle with Monopoly, cunningly disguised of course, over new fields of exploitation in the New West. The people were being fooled as usual by a plausible spokesman, put forward by self-interest as opposed to the interest of the commonwealth, and I stood for the people, of course.

“Everything proceeded most satisfactorily until the very last, when the religious element sprang on Lily and myself the most hideous and nauseating scandal imaginable, and at once the graft-seeking politicians and the orthodox leaders commenced to work together, hand and glove. It is probable that not Christ himself—if he had suddenly appeared and had tried to convince his most zealous followers that, though not married by man, we were yet living a sweet, sane, healthy life together—could have produced the slightest impression in our favor. The truth is that not being tied tightly together by law our relations were delicate, sensitive, ideal. I was always on my best behavior and continued to play the part of the lover with ever increasing joy and satisfaction, both to myself and my noble Lily. Truly love is a sensitive plant; and I am inclined to think it thrives best when associated with liberty. Is not that likewise the belief of Thomas Paine?”

“Most assuredly. He thought the indissoluble

bond paved the way for indifference and neglect; that, being sure of each other, they ceased to take the pains to be mutually agreeable,—indeed became careless if they displeased and yet angry if reproached, with so little relish for each other's company that anybody else's was more agreeable, and more entertaining."

"Good heavens! how true of my own married life. What a hell it was, to be sure!"

"Ah, but you must tell me now about Lily."

"Of course our refusal to make any statements about our domestic relations, either publicly or to disinterested friends who plied us with questions, had the effect of shelving me as completely as Parnell was shelved when scandal overtook him. Having been through the mill once before, I would have taken the matter coolly enough had it not been for the blighting effect the nauseous tittle-tattle had on the loveliest being God ever permitted to come into the world. From the day when a dear, disinterested friend brought her a filthy newspaper full of subtle lies and indecent caricatures, she was killed as effectually as though she had been shot, like Lincoln, by the hand of an assassin; and in less than a month after the campaign was over, her exquisite form was lying deep within the grave. Heart disease was the cause of her sudden death, the doctor said. Poor

man! he had to attribute it to something, and it was better form to say that his patient had died of heart failure rather than a broken heart."

"I should have thought you could have cheered one another up. You still had each other, and God is good. You had but to wait the turn of the tide, and bide your time."

"True. But it made me mad to see how everybody, even the vilest, cut poor Lily. It broke her heart to think she had been instrumental in ruining my political aspirations, though I told her that so long as the people could not distinguish between an honest man who wished to serve them and a dishonest one who meant to betray them, they deserved to be sold out to the Devil. But all the thousand endearments I lavished upon her were vain—as useless as the effort to resuscitate a delicate plant nipped by the blighting breath of Jack Frost. She could not eat; she could not sleep. Everything tired her. I could see that it did, and yet she uttered no word of complaint and never wept nor made a fuss, as some women would have done under the circumstances. I just found her dead one morning, looking up as though she saw the angels coming for her."

"The angels should have given her time to bid you good-bye," said Mrs. Wells, as he paused longer than usual.

"I am not sure. Indeed, I think she had suffered enough, and that it was well they ran off with her at the last.

"Pray, let us walk about a little before you tell me any more."

Mrs. Wells rose as she spoke, and as soon as Mr. Smith, sad and dejected, had imitated her example, she took the heavy shawl, folded it and gave it to him to carry. They walked along one of the many beautiful wooded walks so picturesque and charming, and though the steady upward climb was somewhat harassing, it served to divert Mr. Smith's mind from his sad story, and was therefore a welcome change for both himself and Mrs. Wells. When they had reached a fine, well-seated open space which commanded an interesting view of most of the city, they again laid down the shawl and seated themselves upon it. For a few moments both Mr. Smith and Mrs. Wells yielded to the temptation to gaze absently upon fair Florence, regardless of passing time.

It was the month of May, the most perfect for the Medici city, when the country round about was bathed in its freshest, most radiant loveliness; and the Arno rushed eagerly along in its fruitful course, a streak of scintillating beauty. The mass of buildings in the higher parts of the garden of Boboli were

sufficient to give complete satisfaction to the admiring couple without any of the perplexity incident to a more vast expanse of buildings. The magnificent old cathedral, with its perfect marble campanile, lay in serene splendor quite close to their feet; while grouped around these masterpieces of architecture in every direction were the great fortress palaces. Florence is emphatically a city of palaces, and its environment is not less beautiful and satisfying to the artistic eye than Florence herself; for nothing could be more exquisite than the villa-dotted hills, with their vineyards and olive plantations against a background of picturesque mountains that glimmer away into the blue of the sky—a fit setting, and now her only one, since the graceful wall of towers which jewelled her brow like a royal diadem has given place to “improvements”—so-called by the modern economic mind.

“Florence is a thing of beauty still—is she not?” sighed Mrs. Wells after a time.

“Yes, yes, but getting more commonplace all the time,” Mr. Smith replied. “No great financial family loves her now as the Medici once did, and I can easily believe what a certain Englishman has declared to be the matter with the Florence of the last half century.”

“What is that?”

“That ‘Her historic interest and importance are being constantly effaced.’ I know her taxes are now six times as great as they were under the sway of the Grand-Dukes, even. Of course the Citizen Medici were adepts in matters of finance, as in everything else, and though there was grumbling, as there always will be no matter how thrifty the management, their time was the golden period for Florence—literally as well as figuratively.”

“Ah, but Florence is resting now. She and all Italy will bloom again one of these days; when her people are content to follow the bent of their God-given genius. But we must get down to our proper business again.”

“Yes, yes, I understand. I will ramble no more, I promise you, till I have done with this recital.”

“You were on the point of making a new departure, I think, after the transplanting of the delicate Lily to a less frosty clime.” Mrs. Wells hazarded the guess from what she had been able to divine through intuitive knowledge of his temperament.

“You are right. As the country was booming at the time, I easily turned my possessions into gold and took passage for Liverpool. From Liverpool I went to London, and in no time I hastened to Australia in search of a new wilderness.”

“To Australia! I wonder if you met my brother

Jack out there!" asked Mrs. Wells in a frenzy of excitement.

"I wonder—if—I did," he said slowly, and with a characteristic, sly smile.

"That explains it all!" Mrs. Wells actually got up and began to pull Mr. Smith's hair, none too thick at this period, as though she meant to pull it all out by the roots.

"There!" she exclaimed, as she stopped after a round of pulls on such locks as she could catch. "Why did you not tell me before that you were the Mr. Smith who loved Jack and made his fortune, and nursed him so like a mother to the last! You horrid man!"

She burst out sobbing for a few moments. Mr. Smith said nothing but, "Tut, tut! what a silly woman you are after all, Sallie."

Hearing the name by which Jack had always called her, she commenced immediately a fresh series of sobs, this time on Mr. Smith's breast, who put his arm tenderly about her. However, she was too old a woman to permit herself to behave so sentimentally for very long, and besides, she heard a rustle of the bushes, and at once resumed her usual dignified appearance, though her eyes betrayed the emotion which filled her breast. The rustle was occasioned by a small party of sightseers who merely looked at

the city below for a few moments and then departed, laughing and chatting gaily.

"How quickly you righted yourself, Sallie! I think that must come of your well-proportioned waist, about the size of the Venus of Medici, I should think."

A merry, ringing laugh greeted this speech, followed by the query:

"Pray how many inches around is the waist of the famous Medici Venus?"

"Twenty-five, if my memory serves me rightly."

"Thanks. I am glad to know, and pleased that in one respect I am like the Venus of Medici, probably the most perfect statue in the world. But we must shy clear of the Medici for the short space of time that remains to us. Remember, we shall have to leave this beautiful garden by four o'clock; it is now two, and but two hours remain in which to arrive at a good understanding. Doubtless, however, the time will be ample, because you must be well posted about me, having been such a good friend to my dear brother; so it will be quite unnecessary for me to enter into details about my own past."

"I know all he could tell me and all your letters suggested, we used to read them together as they came, and I liked them so well that he gave them to

me, almost the last thing before he died. I have them safe and easy of access."

"Please tell me when you guessed that I was Jack's sister! It could not have been a great while ago, else you would have betrayed the knowledge sooner, I should say."

"The first time I really looked at you, I said to myself, 'Where have I seen that face?' and I tried to think, to place you every time I saw you. Then somebody told me you were an American; and finally a man declared he had seen you in Salt Lake City. That was enough for me. I knew at once who you were. You are much like your brother Jack."

"Naturally there would be a family resemblance. We have seen nothing of each other, however, since before my marriage with a Mormon Elder. Jack was of a restless, roving disposition and left home shortly before I did, going first to South America, and afterwards to Australia. Ah, how good you were to him—and to me! I should never have been able to leave the States, I think, without his financial help, and it is due to the pretty little fortune he left me that I am in Europe now and in comfortable circumstances. What do not Jack and my boy and myself owe to your generosity and help?" Mrs. Wells' eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

“Tut, tut, Sallie! It was a debit and credit sort of account which is still running. But tell me how it happened that you, Sallie, came to be part and parcel of the worst monopoly which has ever planted itself in a democratic country! I tried to figure it out long before I saw you—and now that I know you it is more of a puzzle than ever. You appear to have an unusual admiration for people who have a knack of seeing things as they are, and yet, Sallie, you did your part towards planting on sacred American soil a monopoly calculated to destroy the hard-won liberty of American womanhood and manhood, and to swamp in the newest West the nearest approach to a democracy the world has yet seen. Sallie, I must admit that you are a woman with a past—a very dangerous past!”

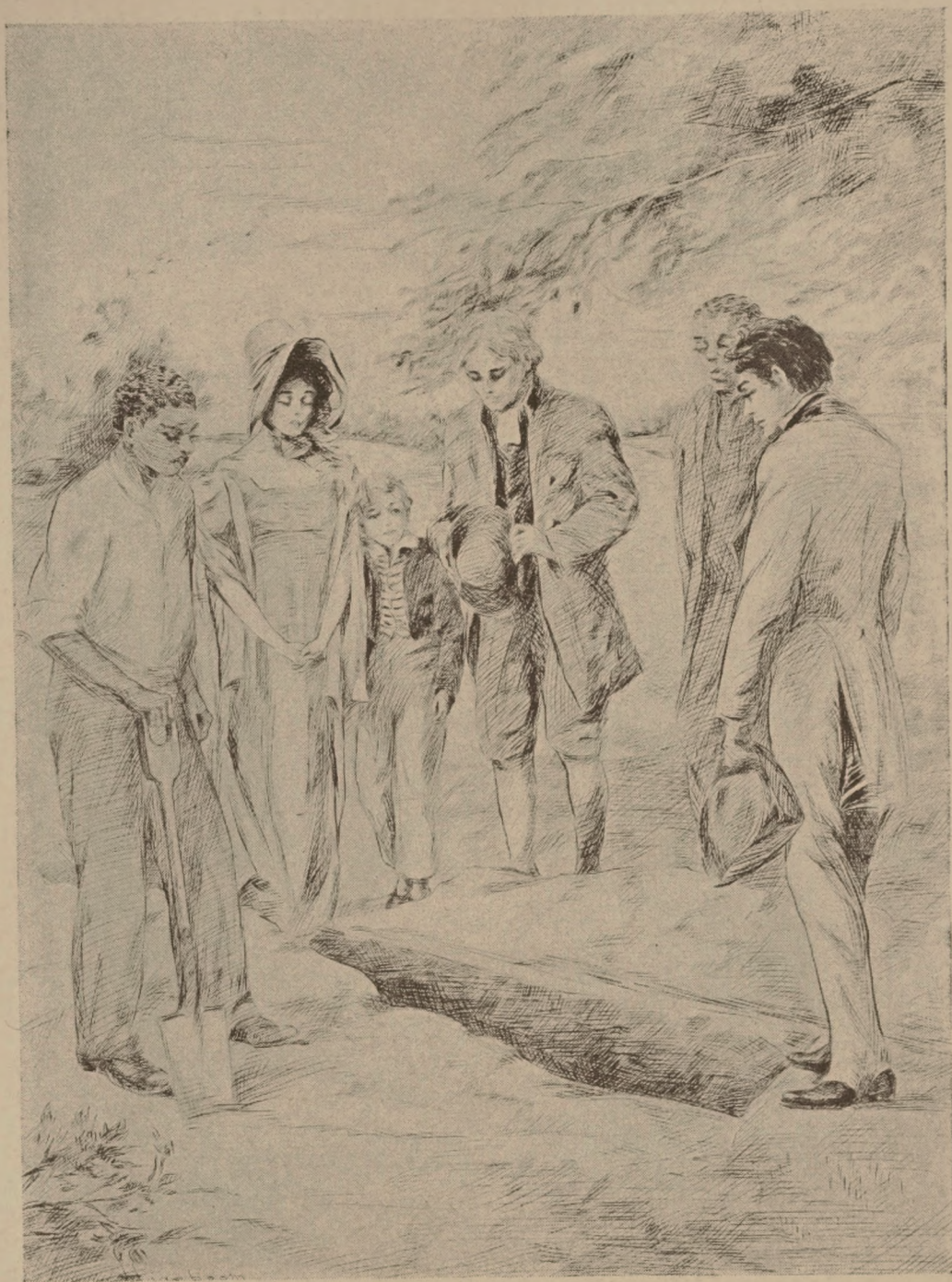
Mr. Smith looked so grave that Mrs. Wells was deceived for a moment into thinking that she might find it difficult to make him understand how blind and ignorant she had been when she came under the Mormon influence. Dreading to enter, even cursorily, on a experience which had caused her such long and bitter travail of spirit after a short period of ecstatic bliss, she rose quickly, saying:

“Let us walk about a few moments and get limbered up before I begin my tale of woe, which I mean to cut as short as possible.”

“As short as you please, Sallie, after you have made it clear to me how you, a woman, born and bred in Democratic America, and one who makes it a creed, as you might say, to see things as they are and to practice a Common Sense Religion, which teaches that God evidently intended the sexes to be paired rather than grouped, since He sent about the same number of each that they might be helpmeets to one another and put in order this huge wilderness we call the Earth—how you could yet pass years in holding up the hands of a Monopoly which, left unchecked, would restore the worst sort of autocracy—the ‘Thus Saith the Lord type.’”

Mrs. Wells seemed somewhat perplexed by this somewhat abrupt question, and, perhaps to gain time in the evolution of her explanation, suggested that they again move on.

Chapter Six



Burial of Thomas Paine

The grand people of America were not there, the clergy were not there ; but beside the negroes stood the Quaker preacher and the French Catholic woman. Madame Bonneville placed her son Benjamin—afterwards General in the United States Army—at one end of the grave, and standing herself at the other end, cried, as the earth fell on the coffin : “ Oh, Mr. Paine, my son stands here as testimony of the gratitude of America, and Π for France ! ”

From the Life of Thomas Paine by Moncure Daniel Conway.

The will of Thomas Paine closes with these words : “ I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator, God.”

CHAPTER SIX

To do good is my religion.—THOMAS PAINE.

“**Y**OU have put the case none too strongly,” Mrs. Wells admitted finally, as they slowly pursued their upward way toward the pretty observatory, “and I wonder myself, as I glance backward, how it was that I could ever have been such a credulous simpleton as to believe, almost without question, so many preposterous things, and how I could have remained in bondage as a chattel for so long!”

She paused long enough to seat herself comfortably and admire the more extended view of Florence and its environs than their previous station had afforded, and then continued:

“You should recall the fact that I was very young, very ignorant, very emotional and consequently very easily impressed; just the soil for religious ideas to take root and grow with exuberant vitality. Besides, a certain chain of circumstances

had contributed to still further prepare my mind for the religious cataclysm which overtook it under the preaching—or exhorting, rather—of two Mormon Elders who came to our neighborhood to save those ‘willing to flee from the wrath to come.’

“Some months previously, my brother Jack had run away from home, which caused us all great grief and hastened the death of my mother who was in very delicate health at the time; and the loss of my favorite brother, followed so closely by the death of my dear mother, made the world seem as dreadful as the Mormon Elders painted it. So when they urged all who would be saved to join the Latter Day Saints and go to the new Zion, the Millennium centre of the world, I, for one, was very eager to do so; so eager, indeed, that the remonstrance of the remaining members of my family only made me the more determined to leave all and flee to the appointed place of refuge. By following this course Elder Wells assured me that I might be the means of saving my whole family—when they were assured of my happiness in the land of Promise held in reserve by the hand of God for the resting-place of His saints. These were the chain of circumstances I have referred to, and there was still another cause made me like clay in the hands of the potter. With the awakening of my spiritual

nature, had come at the same time that other love which, of itself, is apt to bring some sort of a crisis with it."

"You don't mean to tell me you really fell in love with a polygamous Mormon?" Mr. Smith looked very much disgusted.

"Yes, I mean to tell you just that; for it is the truth. But I was not aware—when I hurriedly and secretly married him just before we all set off for Salt Lake, that he had other wives in various places."

Mr. Smith looked relieved, but said nothing.

"Still I am not sure that I would not have swallowed the polygamy part along with the rest, in such a strange state of exaltation was I with the two new loves born in my warm heart almost simultaneously. Someone has said that 'a certain tendency to insanity has often attended the opening of the religious sense in man,' and calls attention to the trances of Socrates the 'union' of Plotinus, the vision of Porphyry, the conversion of Paul, the aurora of Behmen and the convulsions of George Fox, to prove his point. It would be equally easy to quote a list of illustrious persons who have shown this same tendency to insanity when overtaken by love for a person of the opposite sex. Imagine then the state of my frail bark loaded with a double portion of dangerous emotion at one and the same time!"

“How long did this blissful state last, Sarah?” asked Mr. Smith with a touch of cynicism in his voice.

“It lasted during our long journey to Zion, and for a short time afterward.”

“Until you learned of the half-dozen or so other Mrs. Wells,” interposed her companion, with an air of relief rather than of sympathy.

“Well, yes; until an Apostle visited me privately in the absence of my husband and assured me that I was no longer a babe in the divine fold, and that I was indeed strong enough to exchange a diet of milk for one of meat. As he put all he said in Biblical language his conversation impressed me very deeply; so that, when he explained the polygamy part of their religion and declared in no uncertain terms that each man among them meant to live his religion, cost what it might, I almost admired him. He proceeded then to tell me of the many cruel persecutions which had been endured by the Latter Day Saints, and of the heroic band of martyrs which Mormonism had already produced, and finally announced that he would accompany me in his conveyance to the abode which was to be mine, and which had been made quite ready for my reception by its former occupant, the fifth wife of one husband. This ‘sister’ had been called of the Lord to take up

her residence in another place, and Elder Wells had likewise been called at the same time to take up the work of the Lord in the same place; but so suddenly had the summons come to him, and so great was the need of dispatch, that he had found it quite impossible to bid me an affectionate adieu before starting."

"Did you not pull the Apostle's hair for him at this point of his narrative, as you did for me awhile back?"

"No, I did not. I was so bewildered I really behaved as a true wife is expected to do; that is, I was meekness itself, and acquiesced modestly, if rather faintly, to all the instructions tendered me by this member of the Twelve. When once alone in the bare little room which was to be my abode until a Mormon leader should otherwise direct, I proceeded to fasten the door so no one could enter, and quietly sat down. It never once occurred to me to go to bed, though the hour was late, for the Apostle was a facile talker and given to many words; neither did I offer up any kind of prayer the live-long night.

"As I was exceedingly strong and healthy at this time, the morning light found me but little the worse for the hours of internal stress and storm, though my limbs seemed just a trifle unsteady when I attempted to walk about for a change. The first

thing I saw distinctly with the new light of morning was a Bible open on the table. I glanced down at it, and seeing my own name on the page, picked up the book and began to read what Genesis had to say about Sarah, the wife of Abraham, a favorite character with the Mormons. My mother had occasionally read to us on Sunday some stories out of the Bible, and we had committed verses to memory occasionally; but in all my life I could not recall that anyone had told me it was God's will that a man should have more than one wife. I began now to read the Bible with deep interest and close attention."

"A dry business, Sarah," interposed Mr. Smith, changing his position uneasily.

"Quite the contrary to one whose heart was in the condition of mine at that terrible time. In those days nearly all people regarded the Bible as Holy Writ, and it was common to appeal to Scripture to decide difficult questions. In my fearful loneliness and desperate state, I felt I must get a little relief from some source, and so my eyes were soon glued to the pages of the Book. Having finished the story of Sarah, in which I found little satisfaction, I turned to the first chapter of Genesis and read on into the second, where I found a more explicit account of the making of Adam and Eve."

“Here was much food for reflection. Why, I wondered, had God formed Adam and Eve in such a different way! One first parent in one way, and the other in quite a different way; but the thing that puzzled me most was why, after the Creator had fashioned a man, if He had intended him to live polygamously, He had not taken several ribs out of Adam and formed for him a group of wives in the beginning. Then we could have been sure concerning His will in the matter.”

“I made up my mind to spring this question on our much-married husband, when he should put in an appearance; and feeling a little less depressed, I went to the cupboard, and finding a few edibles there I took a couple of eggs, broke the shells, cooked them a little, swallowed the contents, and quickly resumed my Bible reading. To cut my story as short as possible, for our time is nearly up, I will add that when I got the whole Bible read through I——”

Mr. Smith cut off Mrs. Wells' narrative to ask: “And could you reconcile the polygamous practise of the patriarchs and men high in the favor of Jehovah with the sentiment of the New Testament evidently against marriage at all—or at best, merely tolerating it, as a necessary evil?”

“No, I could not. In truth, I was wonderfully

puzzled to learn in the very first chapter of Matthew that Christ was born of a virgin and hence out of wedlock. Another big surprise awaited me when I came to the nineteenth chapter, verse twelve, where I got the impression that Christ considered that, to be made a eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, was the highest type of life——”

“Undoubtedly he thought so, since he stood for self-abnegation—like a woman—in place of self-expansion—like a Medici.”

Mrs. Wells greeted this speech with one of her ringing laughs. “Truly you have Medici on the brain,” she said.

“And why?” he queried. Then he answered his own question: “Because those old Citizen Medici actually did for Florence what I aimed to do for my city, but failed and became a homeless wanderer on the face of the earth, made so by venomous, religious tongues.”

“Ah, well, never mind,” said his companion soothingly. “I think God often takes the wish for the deed and I am sure He sees that in your heart you aimed to be a practical, energetic, unselfish citizen. It is Emerson who said that ‘our age and history for these thousand years has not been the history of kindness but selfishness.’ The people naturally doubted your wish to serve them more

particularly, as you were not what they were pleased to call a Christian."

"Ah—well, well," absently repeated Mr. Smith sadly, as he roused himself to ask: "And what sort of a little marital speech did you prepare for that much-married husband of yours? But, perhaps, he never came back?"

"Oh, yes, he came back all right—or all wrong—it is not easy to say which. And I charged my mind with the accounts of all the unhappy polygamous marriages—and they were all unhappy—and the disastrous consequences to the Jewish nation which followed in the wake of Solomon, the Prince of Polygamists. Naturally, there was a little restraint when our husband came to see me in the abode he had prepared for my reception.

"I cannot repeat all the Elder said, but he finally produced a copy of 'Celestial Marriages,' a revelation on the Patriarchal Order of Marriage or Plurality of Wives, as given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Seer of these latter days. I will repeat a small portion of it, just to give you an idea of how like Holy Writ it sounded, and how easily convinced was I, a credulous ignoramus of fourteen, that God had indeed communicated His will to man concerning these latter days through the new American Prophet, Joseph Smith. The first verse only

will I repeat, since the rest are but variations of the same central theme:

“ ‘ Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand, to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principles and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines: Behold! and lo! I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore prepare thy heart to receive and obey instructions which I am about to give you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same; for, behold! I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant, and if ye obey not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory; for all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as instituted from the foundations of the world; and as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant; it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.’ ”

“ The preposterous religious nerve of this Latter

Day Prophet ought to furnish material for a thousand farces!" said Mr. Smith, laughing heartily.

"I am not sure," responded Mrs. Wells, "but that the credulity of a multitude of fools like myself, who easily parted with a hard-won birthright leading toward the glorious American Temple of Liberty, only to turn back into a nasty House of Bondage and become the silly dupes of an autocratic priesthood simply because the star performer, Joseph Smith, was a past-master in the art of imitating the phraseology of the Scriptures, should afford material for ten thousand farces. But, alas! So long as many of us bear such deep and painful scars, we shall not be able to consider the Mormon religious drama as in the least amusing, even in retrospect. Fully believing I should be eternally damned if I did not obey the polygamous law and all the rest, now that they had been revealed to me, I patiently took up what I thought was my cross and bore it as best I could until our husband was removed by death."

"And what did you do next?" asked Mr. Smith.

"Well, many things had contributed to open my eyes before this event took place. I was prepared when it did occur, to part forever from the Mormon priesthood, and go with my son to some excellent

educational centre and learn whether or not it was too late to Americanize him. Naturally, it was with some eagerness I left a place where I had suffered much sadness and deep loneliness, varied occasionally during the first years with periods of torturing jealousy, when our much-married husband took a new and fresh wife, and made what we old wives thought an unnecessary and too public display of exuberant love for her."

"It is a wonder you did not marry again, Sallie. You must have been regarded as quite a matrimonial prize," said Mr. Smith uneasily, for jealousy was beginning to grip him hard.

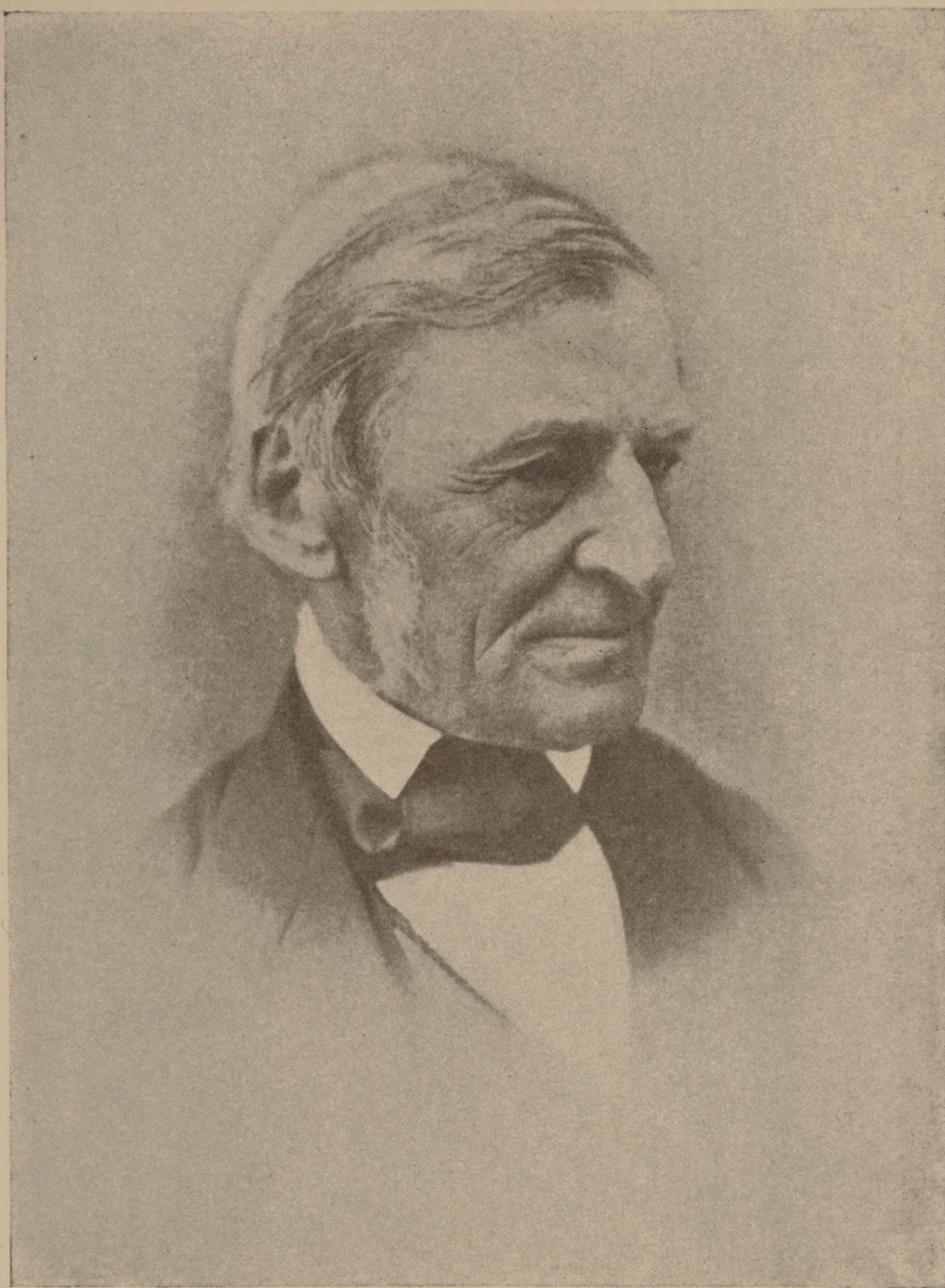
"Most assuredly, after you had helped brother Jack to a fortune and that fortune had been duly transferred to me," Mrs. Wells laughed gaily as she finished speaking. She felt herself growing young again, for the great Spirit of Love had poured into her sad, lonely heart a new and very sweet draught of life's divinest elixir.

"Then why did you not wed some lad?" he asked. "Such unions appear to be coming into fashion, judging by the increasing frequency with which old women lead immature youths to the marriage altar."

Mr. Smith paled perceptibly as he awaited his companion's reply; for who knew after all, whether

it might not be an unquenchable interest in some man, half his own age, that was tugging away at Mrs. Wells' heart-strings and impelling her to return to America. He therefore awaited her answer with keenest anticipation.

Chapter Seven



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Friendship

I sat thinking last night of friendship,
That quality so rare in man,
That word oft used, more often abused
By mankind through our whole life's span.
I dreamed of an ideal friendship,
Of life growing sweet and calm,
Where a man served friends, not selfish ends,
And the lamp and I smoked on.

I pictured my friend as I'd have him,
For whom I would lay down my life,
A steadfast friend, on whom to depend
Through life's battle of storm and strife.
The friendship of which I was dreaming
To one so seldom e'er comes ;
'Tis a greater rarity than Christian charity,
So the lamp and I smoked on.

Lamp and Pipe, shall we stop our smoking,
And give up the search in despair,
Or still look through the leaves of life's book
Till we find such a friend somewhere ?
Shall we ever find one I wonder ?
A friend so sturdy and strong ?
Yes, we will some day, I ween ; if not, we can
dream,
So the lamp and I smoked on.

Anonymous.

CHAPTER SEVEN

America, in an inspired moment, and with rare common-sense, embodied her religion in four words, In God We Trust.

“**W**HY did I not marry when I had the opportunity to be led to the altar by a noble young man—who had saved my idolized boy from drowning?” Mrs. Wells queried dreamily.

“Heaven! Tell me about it!”

Mr. Smith’s frenzied manner waked Mrs. Wells to his true condition. She said sympathetically, placing her hand for a moment confidingly in his:

“Do not worry: I was not in the least tempted to rob a fine specimen of American manhood of the privilege of giving to the New World some fine citizens and to himself the expansion of soul which comes with the rearing of them, and I told him so frankly.”

“What did he say? How did he take your refusal?” Mr. Smith spoke as though a great fear had taken possession of him. His hands were visibly shaking as he began to tear a piece of paper into small bits.

“What did he say?” repeated Mrs. Wells with a faraway look in her soulful eyes. “Oh, everything!—and in most eloquent, soul-stirring words. He had Irish blood in his veins, and I became so apprehensive that in a weak moment I might yield to his seductive arguments, couched in words which burn and with looks which transport, that finally, when my common sense whispered ‘run away’ I heeded its small voice and came to Europe.”

“I suppose my love-making must strike you as a very tame affair after the transports experienced with that fellow.” Mr. Smith looked so unutterably miserable, so meanly jealous as he said “that fellow” that Mrs. Wells could not help laughing—a merry, girlish, ringing laugh. However, not wishing to give him more pain, she said quickly:

“But why make love to me? Haven’t we been having the time of our lives without any love-making?”

“True—true. Yet how be sure of a continuance of our sweet, sane, restful—aye, heavenly—friendship unless I make love to you? Unless we marry. I was thunderstruck when that little old maid with the prematurely white hair and pink cheeks and really seductive manners, informed me that you were returning home to wed—according to Dame Rumor.”

It was now Mrs. Wells' turn to feel some twinges of jealousy concerning a very chic "bachelor woman"—as she called herself—who, Mrs. Wells was aware, had, for some time, been doing her level best to land "the rich widower from Australia."

"And I, on my part," admitted Mrs. Wells, "was thunderstruck when she informed me in a seductive way, and with very pink cheeks, that the 'rich widower from Australia' had proposed so irresistibly and ardently that she had capitulated and would in no long time permit him to lead her to the altar."

"The lying devil!" was all Mr. Smith could say by way of reply, as he got up and strode about for a change. A little more calm, he seated himself again and Mrs. Wells continued:

"I suppose she counted on being able to capture you when I was at a safe distance and you had become a little lonely; she knew we were good friends, though not lovers."

"How did she know we were not lovers? For sometimes we have sat as close to each other as we dared in a public reading-room, and we have never lost an opportunity to shake hands, smile understandingly, and walk a bit together when opportunity offered."

"Oh, I told her we were not. You know she

is very inquisitive and takes a large interest in other people's affairs—especially their love affairs. I would not feel hard toward her if I were you, because I hear she has about reached the end of her financial resources and it stands her in hand to look about for new means of support. In love, as in war, people are not expected to be squeamish in the use of means calculated to effect a conquest."

"That is the great reason why there are so many unhappy marriages," affirmed Mr. Smith shaking his head. "The deceit practised before marriage is discovered afterward and confidence wrecked. But what am I to do now, since you don't seem to wish me to make love to you?" Mr. Smith gazed at his companion with a countenance full of bewilderment.

"Do? Why, nothing! Are we not having the time of our lives?" Mrs. Wells' expression, so often repeated of late, bespoke complete confidence—a thoroughly good understanding.

"Am I to understand that you really don't wish me to make love to you and that you do not care to marry again?"

"Precisely. We would be fools to risk our present felicity for a relation which no one can foresee, or foretell the results thereof. A certain writer has declared that marriage often changes the dispositions of men and women, just as the combining of

two chemicals utterly changes the nature of two ingredients. That is true—and what is more sad than to see two old people unhappily wedded? ”

Mr. Smith blurted out, “ But I thought women had no use for friendship; that it must be an emotional sort of love with them or nothing.”

After a moment's pause, Mrs. Wells replied:

“ In spite of Christ's example, society has not encouraged sympathetic friendly relations between the sexes, unless married to one another. When it does we shall not have so many sad-eyed, prematurely-aged people as we find to-day. Ah, if people only knew what we know—that to be ‘ just friends ’ is the divinest thing on earth! ”

Mr. Smith, being still a little dazed, inquired tentatively: “ Am I to understand that you will give up your projected trip to America, that you will remain here, and that we are to go on reading the papers every morning at the dear old Vieusseux reading-rooms, and shaking hands—like lovers—whenever Uncle Sam does something to startle the Old World, until it does not know where it is at? Truly? ”

“ Truly,” repeated Mrs. Wells, imitating Mr. Smith's gesture.”

“ And every once in a while, when we get ‘ chuck full ’ of ideas that must have an airing, we will indulge in a walking and talking spree such as we have just been enjoying? ”

“ We will! ” asserted Mrs. Wells with amusing, mock-solemn acquiescence.

“ And you will let me rage to the limit against the mad fanatic who did his best to destroy the influence and undo the works of the greatest citizen of fair Florence? ”

“ I will. But on the other hand, you must let me set you right in an all-round way in respect to America’s greatest citizen and saviour—Thomas Paine. Why, until you knew me you believed he was ‘ a filthy little atheist.’ Strange you did not make the effort to discover the real facts about his private life and religious beliefs when you were perfectly aware of his great public services to humanity! There ought to be established a great international society——”

“ What! another society? What for, pray? ”

“ For the prevention of cruelty to——”

“ Good Heavens! Are you not aware that there are hosts of societies and gifted people working for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and for their protection? ”

“ Exactly! But where is the society, or group of

gifted, well-posted people, who make it a business to prevent undue cruelty to the memory of our real saviours and heroes? ”

“ Of course it is not always possible to protect the saviour of a people—like Lincoln for instance—from being shot down like a dog; but such a society might make it its business to run down malicious lies and misleading statements about heroes and saviours whom the people desire to respect and esteem as well as to admire.”

“ Why could not we set such a movement going. We both have money and leisure and we are spending our time in trying to find out the truth about things and about people who have rendered humanity great services.” Mrs. Wells spoke timidly—a little beseechingly and pathetically, having long been suppressed by Mormon leaders.

“ There’s nothing to hinder,” asserted Mr. Smith with his old animation. “ When we indulge in our next walking and talking bout we will discuss that matter; and in the meantime, we will do a lot of hard thinking and quiet brooding. However, let us settle our own business first. What if I should have another stroke that would make it impossible for me to go to our present rendezvous—Vieusseux’s library? ”

“ I will bring the papers you love to your bedside

and read them to you," promptly responded Mrs. Wells.

"And if at the last, Death should tarry in his coming——"

"I will tarry at your bedside—become your nurse—and do all I can to stave Death off—outwit him."

Devoutly and without warning, Mr. Smith raised his eyes heavenward.

"Infinite spirit, I thank Thee that Thou hast led us to see the wondrous beauty in being 'just friends,' " he said earnestly, and lapsed into silence.

They sat for some time, hand in hand, until the lengthening shadows reminded them it was time to return whence they had come: and still hand in hand, they left the spot where each felt a new joy had come bearing a crown, not of thorns, but of roses.

The End.

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